

Visual Cultures of Death in Central Europe

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VOLUME 73

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Visual Cultures of Death in Central Europe

*Contemplation and Commemoration in
Early Modern Poland-Lithuania*

By

Aleksandra Koutny-Jones



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Cover illustration: Aleksander Tarasewicz, *Commemorative illustration portraying nobleman Kazimierz Krzysztof Kłokocki* in: Marcin Kuczarewicz, *Nałęcz Abo Fascia Tromby Smiertelney*, Slutsk 1685. Photograph: Biblioteka Narodowa, Warsaw.

Koutny-Jones, Aleksandra, author.

Visual cultures of death in Central Europe : contemplation and commemoration in early modern Poland-Lithuania / By Aleksandra Koutny-Jones.

pages cm. -- (The northern world ; VOLUME 73)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-90-04-30507-6 (hardback : alk. paper) -- ISBN 978-90-04-30525-0 (e-book) 1. Death in art. 2. Art and society--Poland. 3. Art and society--Lithuania (Grand Duchy) 4. Death--Social aspects--Poland. 5. Death--Social aspects--Lithuania (Grand Duchy) I. Title.

N8217.D5K68 2015

704.9'49306909438--dc23

2015028919

This publication has been typeset in the multilingual "Brill" typeface. With over 5,100 characters covering Latin, IPA, Greek, and Cyrillic, this typeface is especially suitable for use in the humanities. For more information, please www.brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 1569-1462

ISBN 978-90-04-30507-6 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-30525-0 (e-book)

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For Leo and Helena



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Acknowledgements

My work on the art, architecture and visual culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth began as a doctoral dissertation at the University of Cambridge, and I am very grateful to my doctoral supervisor, Professor Jean Michel Massing of King's College, for his generous advice, enthusiasm and encouragement. I was also fortunate to have received valuable comments and ongoing support from my examiners, Professor Paul Crossley of the Courtauld Institute of Art, London and Professor Jerzy Miziołek of the Uniwersytet Warszawski (University of Warsaw).

During my fieldwork I have benefited enormously from the kind help and advice of many people, in particular Professor Wołodymyr Aleksandrowycz of the Uniwersytet Gdański (University of Gdańsk); Mrs Markéta Baštová of the Loreta Praha (Loreto, Prague); Professor Juliusz Chrościcki of the Uniwersytet Warszawski; Ms Joanna Dziubkova of the Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu (National Museum, Poznań); Professor Marcin Fabiański of the Zamek Królewski na Wawelu (Royal Wawel Castle), Kraków; Mr Krzysztof Frankowicz and Dr Jacek Partyka of the Biblioteka Jagiellońska (Jagiellonian Library), Kraków; Ms Anna Grochala of the Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie (National Museum, Warsaw); Mr Marek Hoffmann of the Muzeum Zamek Opalińskich w Sierakowie (Opaliński Castle Museum, Sieraków); Dr Stefanie Knöll and Ms Eva Schuster of the Graphiksammlung 'Mensch und Tod' der Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf; Mr Marek Mazurek of the Muzeum Narodowe w Kielcach (National Museum, Kielce); Dr Giedrė Mickūnaitė of the University of Oxford; Professor Stanisław Mossakowski of the Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk (Institute of Art, Polish Academy of Sciences), Warsaw; Ms Dubravka Mossor of the Zamek Królewski w Warszawie (Royal Castle, Warsaw); Dr Przemysław Mrozowski of the Zamek Królewski w Warszawie; Mr Jacek Orłowski of the Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu; Ms Joanna Patorska of the Muzeum Ziemi Międzyrzeckiej im. Alfa Kowalskiego (Museum, Międzyrzecz); Mr Maxime Préaud of the Département des Estampes et de la photographie, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris; Dr Izabela Przepałkowska, Ms Wanda Rudzińska and Mr Jarosław Wołodko of the Gabinet Rycin, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka w Warszawie (Print Room, University of Warsaw Library); Ms Tatiana Sabodasz of the Lviv National Art Gallery collections, Olesko; Dr Dorota Sidorowicz-Mulak of the Dział Starych Druków, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich (Rare Books Department, Ossoliński National Institute), Wrocław; Mr Olaf Simon of the Dresden Kupferstich-Kabinett, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden; Dr Anna Walczak of the Polska

Akademia Nauk Biblioteka Gdańska (Polish Academy of Sciences Library in Gdańsk); Dr Michał Wardzyński of the Uniwersytet Warszawski; Dr David Weston of Glasgow University Library; and Dr Uli Wunderlich of the Europäische Totentanz-Vereinigung.

In addition, numerous members of the religious community in the former territories of Poland-Lithuania have been more than generous in aiding my research, of which special mention should be made of the Reverend Henryk Brzozowski of the Oratory of St Philip Neri, Gostyń; the Reverend Jan Grochowski of the Church of the Holy Trinity, Tarłów; the Reverend Hipolit Hryciuk of the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, Węgrów; the Reverend Andrzej Polakowski of the Church of the Holy Trinity, Zambrów; and the Reverend Jan Stanisław Rudziński OSPPE of the Pauline monastery of Jasna Góra, Częstochowa.

I would also like to thank Dr Rosalind Polly Blakesley, Professor Stanisław Mossakowski, Dr Przemysław Mrozowski and others, who asked insightful questions when material pertaining to this book was presented in conference and seminar papers at the History of Art Department, University of Cambridge; The Martin Centre for Architectural and Urban Studies, University of Cambridge; the Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Dresden; the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Exeter; the Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Kraków; the Sapienza Università di Roma; the University of California, Santa Barbara; and the Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Warsaw. In addition, during my studies I appreciated the many valuable discussions with others then based at the History of Art Department, Cambridge, in particular Professor Paul Binski, Dr Maxime Deurbergue, the Reverend Alexander Faludy, Dr Lydia Hamlett, Dr Berthold Kress, Dr Julian Luxford and Mr Duncan Robinson.

The kind assistance of staff at several libraries and print rooms has enabled me to access a large number of rare books and graphic images, as well as secondary literature. I list these institutions in alphabetical order by location: Kunstbibliothek, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin; Berlin Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin; Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin; Cambridge University Library; Faculty Library, Faculty of Architecture and History of Art, University of Cambridge; King's College Library, Cambridge; Pembroke College Library, Cambridge; Archiwum Kurii Metropolitalnej, Kraków; Archiwum Prowincji Polskiej OO. Dominikanów, Kraków; Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Kraków; Biblioteka Naukowa PAU i PAN, Kraków; Gabinet rycin, Fundacja Książąt Czartoryskich przy Muzeum Narodowym w Krakowie, Kraków; the British Library, London; the Conway and Witt libraries of the Courtauld Institute of Art, London; the Department of Prints and Drawings, the British Museum, London; the Polish Library, Polish Social and Cultural Association, London; the School of Slavonic

and East European Studies Library, University College London; Sir John Soane's Museum, London; the Warburg Institute Library and Photographic Collection, London; the Wellcome Library, London; the Lviv Museum of the History of Religion; the Vasyl Stefanyk Lviv National Scientific Library of Ukraine; the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford; Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris; Bibliothèque Polonaise de Paris; Biblioteka Instytutu Historii Sztuki, Uniwersytet Warszawski, Warsaw; Biblioteka Instytutu Sztuki PAN, Warsaw; Biblioteka Muzeum Narodowego, Warsaw; Biblioteka Narodowa, Warsaw; Biblioteka Uniwersytecka w Warszawie, Warsaw; Stowarzyszenie Historyków Sztuki, Biblioteka im. Jana Białostockiego, Warsaw.

My studies in Cambridge were made possible by a Postgraduate Award from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, while generous travel grants from Pembroke College, Cambridge and the Kettle's Yard Travel Fund enabled me to carry out research abroad. The award of the Zdanowich Prize for Polish Studies, Trinity College, Cambridge, also helped fund my fieldwork. Associate membership of the Faculty of History, University of Oxford provided me with a stimulating environment for completing my manuscript, and I am grateful to Brill Academic Publishers for accepting it for publication. In particular, I would like to thank Mr Julian Deahl and Mrs Marcella Mulder at Brill, as well as the series editors, for making the publishing process so smooth.

Furthermore, I owe a special debt of gratitude to my aunt, Mirosława Koutny-Giedrys of the Zamek Książąt Pomorskich w Szczecinie (Pomeranian Dukes' Castle, Szczecin), who was my companion during trips to Lviv and Vilnius and has been a source of boundless art-historical enthusiasm, and to my uncle, Ryszard Giedrys, for ferrying me round remote parts of western Poland while entertaining me with discussions about art conservation. During research trips to Warsaw, it was a pleasure to discuss art and pedagogy with my late grandmother and frequent host, Maria Pietkiewicz. Last but not least, I should like to thank my parents, Marta and Maciej Koutny, and my husband, Justin Jones, for providing me with unwavering and invaluable support throughout this project. The book is dedicated to my children.

A Note on Proper Names

Cities and other settlements in this volume are largely referred to by the name in use at the time of publication, in order to make them easier for the reader to locate on recent maps. When a settlement is mentioned for the first time, however, the name by which it was commonly known at the time of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (generally the Polish name) is also stated. Map 1, which shows the boundaries of Poland-Lithuania in the late eighteenth century, also uses the place names in currency at that time.

I have chosen to refer to rulers of Poland-Lithuania using their Polish names. For instance, I use 'Zygmunt' instead of 'Sigismund'. A small number of Polish terms are also used in the volume; these are translated in the Glossary as well as the first time that they appear in the main text.

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Glossary

<i>Buława</i>	A military mace with a bulbous head associated with the rank of <i>hetman</i> .
<i>Czekan</i>	An axe for breaking helmets.
<i>Delia</i>	A lavish fur-lined cloak.
<i>Dróżki</i>	Pilgrimage paths.
<i>Guzy</i>	Ornamental buttons on traditional Polish-Lithuanian dress.
<i>Herb</i>	A coat of arms, often associated with more than one family.
<i>Hetman</i>	Army commander. Four such commanders were in post at any one time, as Poland and Lithuania each appointed a grand hetman and a field hetman.
<i>Kołpak</i>	A round cap, often made of fur.
<i>Konfederatka</i>	A fur-trimmed hat.
<i>Portret trumienny</i>	Coffin portrait. A distinctive type of funerary and commemorative artwork largely unique to Poland-Lithuania.
<i>Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów</i>	The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, comprising the united territories of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.
<i>Sejm</i>	Parliament/ Diet. This included the king, the senate (attended by government ministers, castellans, bishops and palatines) and the chamber of envoys.
<i>Skarbony duchowne</i>	Spiritual treasures. Caskets containing dice or cards with numbers prompting the user to say a prayer for specific trapped souls in purgatory.
<i>Stan</i>	An order or class of persons (estate).
<i>Starosta</i>	A government official appointed by the king.
<i>Szlachta</i>	The Polish-Lithuanian nobility, who benefited from many political privileges. This fiscally-diverse elite is sometimes divided into the sub-groups of magnates and gentry.
<i>Szyszak</i>	A decorative helmet typically worn by the <i>husaria</i> (heavy cavalry).
<i>Taniec śmierci</i>	Dance of Death. A pan-European macabre motif adopted in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the seventeenth century.

<i>Wojewoda</i>	A chief provincial governor or palatine, who was responsible for the defence of his <i>województwo</i> (palatinate).
<i>Złoty</i>	The main currency used in Poland-Lithuania (one <i>złoty</i> equalled thirty <i>groszy</i>).
<i>Żupan</i>	A tight, long buttoned tunic with long sleeves.

The Central European Age of Contemplation and Commemoration

Piotr Myszkowski (c. 1510–1591), one of the first Bishops of Kraków to serve in a united Poland and Lithuania, was a learned individual who had been educated in Padua as well as the then-capital city of Kraków, and grew to become a prolific patron of the arts.¹ Yet, despite his personal success in ascending to one of the highest religious offices in the Commonwealth, Bishop Myszkowski remained close to his noble roots and was not afraid to use his elevated position to further his family's interests. Having carefully amassed a substantial inheritance for his relations, it was likely through convention that, when writing his will in 1586, Bishop Myszkowski requested that his funeral be a modest affair.² He should be buried, he asked with feigned humility, 'without unnecessary pomp, which could incur secular pride, to which in life I was also opposed'.³ His benefactors chose quite the opposite, of course, holding the funeral in a manner they considered more fitting of his and their own elite status.

- 1 An avid patron of the arts, Piotr Myszkowski commissioned work from artists such as Santi (Ognisanti) Gucci (c. 1530–1600). See Ilia M. Rodov, *The Torah Ark in Renaissance Poland: A Jewish Revival of Classical Antiquity*, Leiden and Boston 2013, pp. 146 and 162–163. He was also a friend and supporter of the renowned Polish humanist poet Jan Kochanowski (1530–1584), who had also studied in Kraków and Padua. Jerzy Ziomek, *Wielka historia literatury polskiej. Renesans*, Warsaw 2002, pp. 264–265. In addition, Piotr Myszkowski was notable for taking 'a stand against religion-motivated violence' against Protestants. See Peter Paul Bajer, *Scots in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 16th–18th Centuries: The Formation and Disappearance of an Ethnic Group*, Leiden and Boston 2012, p. 234. For Piotr Myszkowski's biography, see Leszek Hajdukiewicz and Halina Kowalska, 'Myszkowski Piotr h. Jastrzębiec', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XXII, 1977, pp. 382–390. The *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* or *PSB* (Polish Biographical Dictionary) is an ongoing project undertaken by the Polska Akademia Umiejętności (PAU; Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences) and the Polska Akademia Nauk (PAN; Polish Academy of Sciences). It was first published in 1935.
- 2 In fact, by the seventeenth century, testaments that overtly rejected lavish funerary ceremonial were not uncommon in Poland-Lithuania. See David Frick, *Kith, Kin, and Neighbors: Communities and Confessions in Seventeenth-Century Wilno*, Ithaca and London 2013, p. 381.
- 3 '[...] bez niepotrzebnej pompy, która by się na pychę świecką ściągać mogła, jakiej bywałem i za życia przeciwny'. He requested that he be buried in the Church of St Michael by the Castle in Kraków. See Andrzej Fischinger, 'Kaplica Myszkowskich w Krakowie', *Rocznik Krakowski*, XXXIII, no. 3, 1956, p. 84.

The three-day spectacle that was subsequently held at Kraków's Dominican Church was conducted, as one contemporary chronicler put it, *nowym sposobem* ('in the new manner'), inspired by Roman ceremonial, and not seen before in Poland.⁴ At its centrepiece was an elaborate catafalque draped in black cloth and lavishly spot-lit with numerous lamps and costly candles. In a final act of hubris, as the fortunes of Bishop Myszkowski's family continued to improve, a splendid mausoleum for the dynasty was constructed at the church where his funeral had taken place. Even Piotr would also have been astonished, most likely, by the shameless audacity of the Myszkowski Chapel (attributed to the school of the Florentine-trained Santi Gucci⁵ and completed in 1614), which was styled upon the sixteenth-century Sigismund Chapel at Kraków's Wawel Cathedral, built to commemorate members of one of Europe's major ruling dynasties: the Jagiellonians.⁶ Even more conceited than the royal references in its architecture, however, was the incorporation of sculpted portraits of the Myszkowskis at the base of the chapel's coffered dome, one row below busts of angels who gaze down from its ornate cupola as though from the vaults of heaven (Fig. 1).

The example of the Myszkowskis is just one indication of a pronounced shift in attitudes to death in the early years of the Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów (the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), a political entity that was created at the Union of Lublin in 1569 from the united territories of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This was one of early modern Europe's largest states, which incorporated the majority of present-day Poland and Lithuania, in addition to territories now in Ukraine and Belarus (see Maps 1 and 2). It was, moreover, perhaps without parallel

4 Given the extensive preparations required for such a spectacle, the funeral was held over a month after Bishop Myszkowski's death. It was also a 'double burial', shared with the Bishop's recently-deceased nephew. See Stanisław Wiliński, *U źródeł portretu staropolskiego*, Warsaw 1958, pp. 8–9.

5 Fischinger, 1956, p. 99. For the Myszkowski Chapel, see also Jerzy Z. Łoziński, *Grobowe kaplice kopułowe w Polsce 1520–1620*, Warsaw 1973, pp. 146–171.

6 The Jagiellonians ruled across several Central European states during the Renaissance period, yet have been frequently overlooked in international scholarship. This important dynasty is currently the subject of a major research project led by historian Natalia Nowakowska at the University of Oxford ('The Jagiellonians: Dynasty, Memory and Identity'). For the Jagiellonians in Poland, see Urszula Borkowska, *Dynastia Jagiellonów w Polsce*, Warsaw 2011. For the Jagiellonians and Central European culture, see also Jiří Fajt, ed., *Europa Jagellonica, 1386–1572: Art and Culture in Central Europe under the Jagiellonian Dynasty*, exhibition catalogue, Galerie Středočeského kraje May–September 2012, Kutná Hora 2012.

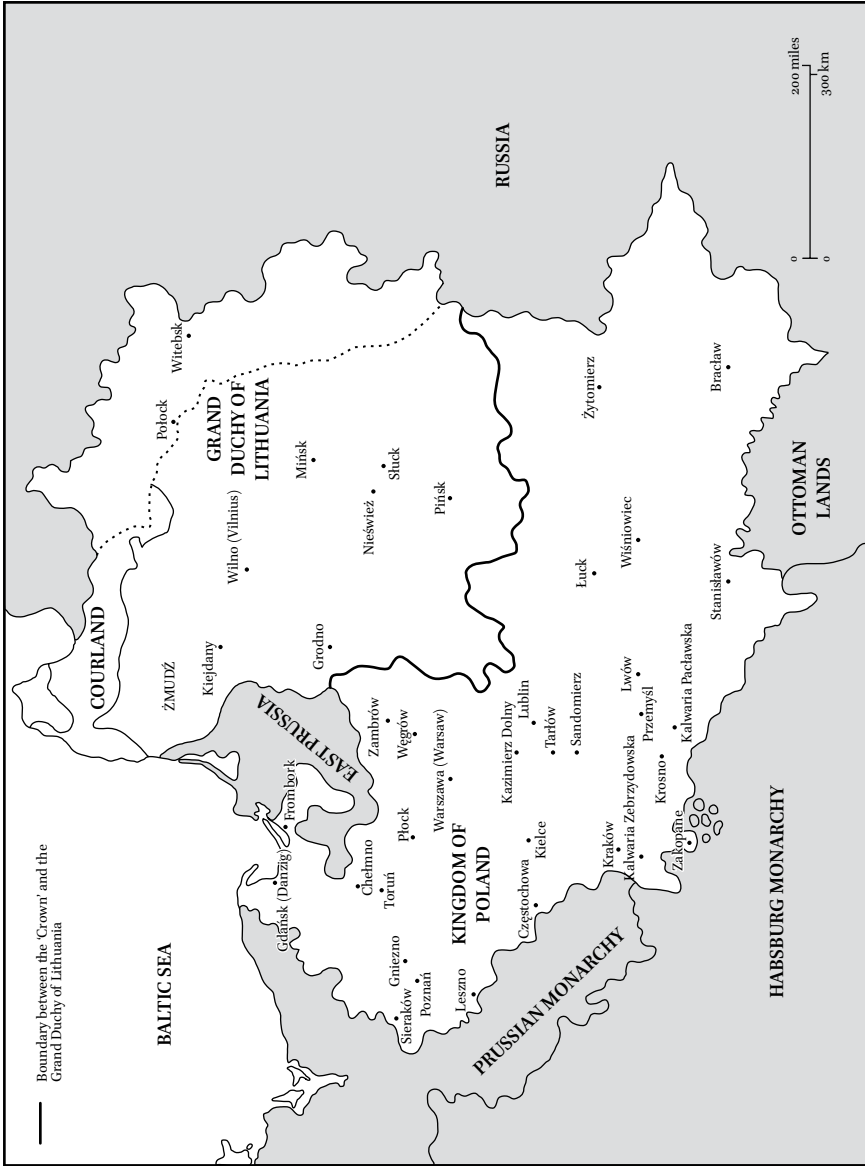


FIGURE 1
*School of Santi Gucci, Coffered cupola
 featuring angels and busts of the
 Myszkowski family, completed 1614,
 Myszkowski Chapel, Dominican Church,
 Kraków.*

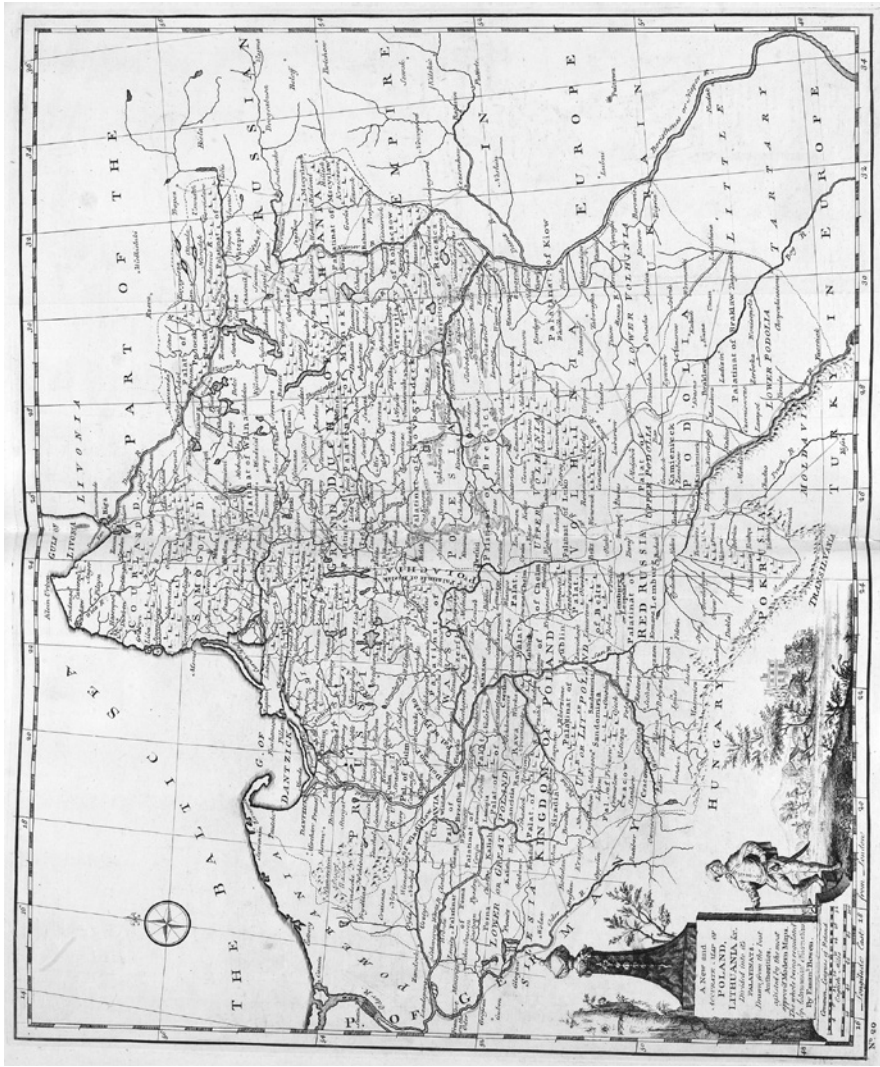
PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA
 KOUTNY-JONES

across early modern Europe as a society profoundly preoccupied with death. The artistic productions of the period, ones born out of a potent concoction of social aspirations and religious devotion, seemed to make reflections upon dying something of a normative cultural practice. Churches proclaimed the promise of death with an array of emotive and instructive imagery, from skeletons and cadavers to tolling bells and sounding trumpets. There was widespread adoption of macabre motifs such as the 'Dance of Death', as well as distinctive art-forms, among them the 'coffin portrait' (a commemorative bust depiction, showing the deceased as still living). When funerals were held, liturgical protocol surrounding burial often mingled with a type of ostentatious commemoration rarely seen on such a scale in other parts of Europe. Meanwhile, privately-commissioned mausolea, newly-endowed Jerusalem pilgrimage sites and other spaces dedicated to reflection upon death increasingly began to populate the landscape of this vast state.

During this period, it seems, such an abundance of eschatological art and architecture meant that death certainly ceased to be a matter of solely personal



MAP 1 The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth prior to partition showing places of artistic interest discussed in this study.



MAP 2 Emanuel Bowen, A new and accurate map of Poland, Lithuania & c., c. 1750.
PHOTOGRAPH: THE BODLEIAN LIBRARIES, THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
(SHELFMARK ALLEN LRO 91, MAP 28)

or familial significance; instead, the theme of mortality was grounded firmly within the social life and public spheres of early modern Poland-Lithuania. Artworks that proclaimed and promoted the contemplation and commemoration of death were designed to engage numerous participants within these activities, be it Christian congregations, for whom the Church became a necessary mediating force in processes of reflection, or lay elites, who increasingly used funerals and mausolea for the overtly secular purposes of flaunting their pedigree and wealth, as well as of communicating dynastic cohesion and collective memory. Equally striking was the fact that this culture appeared to transcend the boundaries of confessional and ethnic specificity. For instance, Polish and Lithuanian nobility alike participated in the same audacious funerary practices; and, while the Commonwealth's Catholic population proved particularly susceptible to engaging with this emphasis upon death, certain key art forms⁷ were also found among the region's Protestant and Orthodox communities, especially in religiously-diverse cities such as Wilno (Vilnius) and Lwów (now Lviv in Ukraine) where members of different confessions lived in close proximity. This notable cultural trend, in other words, sustained a heavy presence throughout much of Polish-Lithuanian society, and was to continue and strengthen until the Commonwealth's final partition and dissolution in 1795.⁸

Taking as its subject this Central European age of contemplation and commemoration, this book addresses the question of why visual cultures of death became so pervasive in this particular region at this time. I relate the ubiquity of such *memento mori* ('remember that you must die') themes to a combination of political, economic and religious concerns in early modern Poland-Lithuania. These include the existence of strong patronage groups who considered the commemoration of death a social priority, as well as a resurgent Catholic Church which espoused eschatological imagery for the purposes of public proselytisation. The widespread effect of factors such as these throughout the Commonwealth, and their distinct interaction within this geographical remit, enabled the uptake of variegated cultures of death across a vast territory. Together, I argue, they consolidated the Commonwealth's overtly

7 Notably the coffin portrait; see Chapter 4.

8 The late eighteenth century saw the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth gradually divided between its neighbours (Prussia, Russia and Austria), until it lost its independence. This process came about in stages: there were partitions in 1772, 1793 and, finally, in 1795. See Jerzy Lukowski, *The Partitions of Poland 1772, 1793, 1795*, London 1999. For the final years of the Commonwealth, see also Richard Butterwick, *The Polish Revolution and the Catholic Church, 1788–1792: a political history*, Oxford 2012.

public attitude to death, in which contemplation could be conspicuous as well as introspective, and in which commemoration could spill over into unrestrained spectacle and glorification.

Little has been published in English on the profound artistic emphasis upon mortality across this expanse of early modern Europe. This is partly due to the fact that the majority of international academic interest in European cultures of death has focused, rather, upon the Middle Ages, or taken this period as a necessary starting point. This includes classic studies, such as those of historians Johan Huizinga and Jean Delumeau, both of whom contributed to the evolution of debates surrounding the culture and iconographies of death.⁹ Huizinga claimed, for example, that 'no other age has so forcefully and continuously impressed the idea of death on the whole population as did the fifteenth century',¹⁰ while Delumeau's study of a European 'guilt culture', plagued by obsessions with death and hell, drew from the emergence of macabre themes such as the 'Three Living and the Three Dead' and the Dance of Death in the late-medieval period. More recent art historical analyses, including those of Paul Binski, Michael Camille and Elina Gertsman, have continued this association of macabre art with the Middle Ages.¹¹ While this line of argument is well established, it has often depended upon a focus on Western Europe (and especially its northern states),¹² where these themes were in heavy

9 The first Dutch edition of Huizinga's study was published in 1919, while the original French edition of Delumeau's book was published in 1983. See Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, tr. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch, Chicago 1996 (especially the chapter entitled 'The Vision of Death', pp. 156–172); Jean Delumeau, *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture, 13th–18th centuries*, tr. Eric Nicholson, New York 1990. Another classic study is that of Philippe Ariès. See Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, tr. Helen Weaver, New York 1981. For a more recent historical analysis of these themes, mostly confined to Western Europe but with an essay on Transylvania, see Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall, eds., *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 2000.

10 Huizinga, 1996, p. 156. For the impact and scholarly reception of *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, see Francis Haskell, 'Art and history: the legacy of Johan Huizinga', in Axel Bolvig and Phillip Lindley eds., *History and Images: Towards a New Iconology*, Turnhout 2003, pp. 3–17.

11 Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation*, London 1996; Michael Camille, *Master of Death: The Lifeless Art of Pierre Remiet, Illuminator*, New Haven and London 1996; Elina Gertsman, *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages: Image, Text, Performance*, Turnhout 2010. Earlier studies include Thomas Sherrer Ross Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages: Mortality, Judgment and Remembrance*, London 1972.

12 A small number of recent studies (notably Gertsman's work on the Dance of Death) have highlighted isolated examples of late medieval macabre art produced beyond Western Europe, as discussed further in Chapter 3.

circulation in the medieval period. This narrative, however, does not apply to the region in question here; for in the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, *memento mori* preoccupations cannot be so strongly identified in the Middle Ages and, as will be argued, only emerged in significant numbers by the seventeenth century. This leaves us unable to rely on a narrative of local medieval precedent in explaining this cultural obsession with mortality, and challenges us to formulate a cultural narrative that differs from that held for other parts of Europe.

In spite of these differences, the ways in which previous studies have often analysed death-related culture in medieval Europe – namely, by grounding their analysis in the wider social and religious fears that marked the period – seem to have at least an intuitive parallel with early modern Poland-Lithuania. In broad terms, the cultural framework of this Commonwealth was not dissimilar to Huizinga's bold, if much-critiqued, account of late-medieval French and Netherlandish hierarchical societies that revelled in pomp and spectacle, yet were plagued by an underlying pessimism and fear of death, which was fuelled by the preaching of the mendicant orders.¹³ For Huizinga, cultural ruminations on death, ranging from moralising art to funerary ceremonials, were reflective of a broader malaise which permeated late-medieval society; in a similar way, this study frequently draws links between the production of death-related imagery and the collective anxieties of sections of the Polish-Lithuanian population. Others who have assessed macabre iconography, among them Paul Binski, have advocated a cautious approach to such frameworks of cultural 'causation'.¹⁴ His assertion that developments in art should be analysed on their own terms, as 'constitutive representations which enjoyed their own cultural space, autonomy, impact and process of development',¹⁵ is an important one in a field which all too easily relegates artworks to by-products of historical events. I would like to propose, nevertheless, that a holistic approach can be taken without compromising the integrity of visual sources, in particular when they are viewed on equal terms with their textual counterparts.¹⁶ For this reason, this book seeks to combine elements of both

13 For the mendicant orders and the 'call of the *memento mori*', see Huizinga, 1996, p. 156.

14 For cultural 'causation', see Binski, 1996, pp. 126–134.

15 Ibid., p. 134.

16 Many visual examples in this book, in fact, are taken from printed publications where text and image are intrinsically linked. The incorporation of heraldic symbols and textual excerpts in larger works of art, both commemorative and macabre, also adds an emblematic and literary dimension to the visual arts, which challenges the boundaries between text and image.

approaches, by examining death-related iconographies in their own right in terms of their prototypes and meanings, whilst also paying due attention to the reasons for the commissioning of such artworks and the personal and social functions that they held.

As such, my work contributes to the recent drive to develop interdisciplinary methodologies for the study of historical cultures of death as has been pursued in some recent studies dealing with the Middle Ages. In her important re-analysis of the Dance of Death, for example, art historian Elina Gertsman has situated this moralising motif within visual, textual and performative traditions. Gertsman also engages notions of semiotics, advocating 'the consideration of visual objects of inquiry as cultural signs mediated, in varying degrees, not only by an artist or a patron, but also by an audience'.¹⁷ This semiotic framework encourages us to consider the responses of often-overlooked interpreters, such as members of congregations in churches where Dances of Death were displayed, who were not themselves involved in the commissioning process. Linguist Ashby Kinch, meanwhile, in his monograph on late medieval death-related culture, stresses the close relationships between text and image in selected macabre themes and employs notions of community to assess the role of eschatological imagery in mediating the 'tension between contemplating one's final end and affirming one's social identity'.¹⁸ In the present study I also juxtapose a range of literary and artistic sources to reveal the continuing co-dependence of textual and visual traditions in the later manifestations of such themes in Central Europe. To this end, I draw upon a variety of primary and secondary materials never used before in English-language scholarship,¹⁹ including indigenous rewritings of themes such as the Dance of Death. My artistic sources, which include artefacts that have only recently received any real attention due to their inclusion in local 'blockbuster' exhibitions,²⁰ are supplemented with considerations drawn from theology,

17 Gertsman, 2010, p. 14.

18 Ashby Kinch, *Imago Mortis: Mediating Images of Death in Late Medieval Culture*, Leiden and Boston 2013.

19 Titles and quotations from primary sources have been transcribed according to the original spelling. All translations from Polish are the author's own.

20 The prominent museological redisplay of death-related artefacts, such as coffin portraits and funerary trappings, has contributed to a sense of nation building in post-Soviet Central Europe. Major regional exhibitions dealing with Polish-Lithuanian visual attitudes to death have included *Vanitas* at the National Museum in Poznań in 1996–1997, which dealt specifically with the coffin portrait and funerary practice. In 2000, Polish death culture from the Middle Ages until the end of the eighteenth century was explored at an exhibition held at the Royal Castle in Warsaw whilst, simultaneously, an exhibition

literature and social history to provide a multi-faceted account of the distinctive death-related cultures of Poland-Lithuania.

Aside from its interdisciplinary emphasis, this study deals with a rich gamut of material from within the related disciplines of art history and visual culture. One of its key purposes, therefore, is to consider diverse artistic outputs together, from what has popularly been termed as 'high' art to 'folk' art,²¹ and examine the interaction between these cultural artefacts in the contemplation and commemoration of death in Central Europe. I have specifically adopted the term 'visual cultures' to indicate the wide range of artistic production addressed by my study, spanning architecture and fine art, as well as graphic art and aspects of material and performative culture. 'Cultures' is used in the plural to acknowledge the multiplicity of approaches to death which co-existed and, sometimes, conflicted with one another during the period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Consequently, this study contributes to a growing corpus of publications concerned with visual culture studies which, in the words of art historian James D. Herbert, 'democratizes the community of visual artifacts'.²² In other words, it considers a range of visual material on an equal footing in order to address common themes.

Despite the varied methods of their production there is, in fact, a perhaps surprising stylistic cohesion among many of the artworks analysed in the

at the National Museum in Kraków showcased death-related Polish art of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These three exhibitions were accompanied by extensive catalogues. Joanna Dziubkowska, ed., *Vanitas. Portret trumieny na tle sarmackich obyczajów pogrzebowych*, exhibition catalogue, Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu November 1996–February 1997, Poznań 1996; Anna Król et al. *Obrazy śmierci w sztuce polskiej XIX i XX wieku*, exhibition catalogue, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie September – November 2000, Kraków 2000; Przemysław Mrozowski, ed., *Przeraźliwe echo trąby żałosnej do wieczności wzywającej. Śmierć w kulturze dawnej Polski od średniowiecza do końca XVIII wieku*, exhibition catalogue, Zamek Królewski w Warszawie 15 December 2000–March 2001, Warsaw 2000.

- 21 Craft production, better known as 'folk art', has long been marginalised in art historical studies. This tradition can be traced back to attitudes such as those espoused by the Royal Academy of Arts when it was founded in the late 1760s with the proviso that 'no needle-work' and other types of crafts 'should be admitted'. See Jeff McMillan, 'The House that Jack Built: Essay as Sampler', in Ruth Kenny, Jeff McMillan and Martin Myrone, *British Folk Art*, exhibition catalogue, Tate Britain, London 10 June–31 August 2014 and Compton Verney, Warwickshire 27 September–14 December 2014, London 2014, p. 13.
- 22 James D. Herbert, 'Visual Culture/Visual Studies', in Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff eds., *Critical Terms for Art History*, Chicago and London 2003, p. 452. See also Marquard Smith, 'Visual Culture Studies: Questions of History, Theory, and Practice', in Donald Preziosi ed., *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, Oxford 2009, pp. 455–467.

present study, since the Central European age of contemplation and commemoration coincided closely with the Baroque period in Polish-Lithuanian art. Broadly speaking, Baroque stylistic influences, which can be detected in the Commonwealth after 1580, continued until the 1740s and this visual legacy could still be felt in provincial areas until the period of partition.²³ This was, therefore, a particularly 'long Baroque', to coin a phrase. Moreover, the Baroque style linked Poland-Lithuania into wider European artistic contexts and overlapped almost exactly with the existence of the Commonwealth, during which time it became the vehicle of expression for visual cultures of death.

Seeking to identify the genesis of death-related visual themes during the long Baroque, I argue that the development of such imagery in Poland-Lithuania was influenced by increased cultural contacts with other parts of Europe. My investigations within this remit are informed by the art historical methodology of iconography, a method of decoding and visual cross-referencing that 'concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form'.²⁴ By adopting an iconographical approach, I seek to demonstrate the breadth of visual influences that impacted upon Polish-Lithuanian artistic production, situating this region at the heart of cross-European flows of artistic exchange. So, for instance, I show how the growth of the print trade across Europe gave Polish-Lithuanian artists access to a wide range of graphic prototypes, upon which their own commissions would be based. Similarly, with Italian and Netherlandish artists and architects, for example, being drawn into larger commissions in key cities such as Kraków, Warsaw, Vilnius and Lviv, we see an increase in the kind of first-hand contacts upon which these artistic exchanges would be based. Notwithstanding the foreign genesis of much Polish-Lithuanian death-related iconography, however, I do not suggest that these wider European artistic themes were accepted uncritically. Instead, I argue that models were substantially adapted to increase their relevance to local audiences and meet the requirements of patrons: traditions

23 This definition of Baroque is taken from the work of art historian Mariusz Karpowicz. See Mariusz Karpowicz, *Sztuki polskiej drogi dziwne*, Bydgoszcz 1994, pp. 10–17. The Polish-Lithuanian Baroque is largely overlooked in international art historical scholarship, with the best overview being provided in a translation of Mariusz Karpowicz's classic study. See Mariusz Karpowicz, *Baroque in Poland*, tr. Jerzy A. Bałdyga, Warsaw 1991. For a more general study of the Baroque in Central Europe, see Eberhard Hempel, *Baroque Art and Architecture in Central Europe*, Harmondsworth 1965.

24 This quotation is taken from the work of art historian Erwin Panofsky, who also identified a more synthetic approach, which he referred to as 'iconology', in which iconography is considered within its cultural context in order to interpret 'intrinsic meaning or content'. See Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, Chicago 1955, pp. 26 and 30.

of commemorative art and funerary ritual, for instance, were often very different from those found elsewhere in Europe and sometimes characterised by esoteric artistic and performative practices. I seek to demonstrate, therefore, that, while the visual cultures of death constructed in Poland-Lithuania were recognisably European, they were also heavily reworked according to the priorities of their own cultural setting.

As already indicated, and despite a range of studies tracing themes relating to mortality in Western European contexts across historical periods, much of Central Europe has not featured greatly in international scholarship dealing with cultures of death. Whilst seeking to address this significant omission, this book is also, in a more general sense, part of a growing and much-overdue effort to fully integrate Central Europe – a region all too often relegated to the peripheries of mainstream art historical work – into a discipline traditionally dominated by Western Europe. In tracing the cultural links and transactions across these regions, this study argues for a reinstatement of the importance of Poland-Lithuania within existing art historical debates on issues such as the artistic ramifications of Europe's programme of Catholic Reform, generally referred to as the Counter-Reformation,²⁵ and the impact of the early modern print trade.²⁶ In particular, I draw upon proposals for a 'critical geography of art' as discussed in the work of Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, who has made a strong case for the incorporation of early modern Central Europe (which he defines as the majority of the lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Holy Roman Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary)²⁷ into 'a unified notion of European culture'.²⁸ For example, the present study engages with and evaluates theories such as diffusionism, most recently discussed in relation to the art history of Central Europe by DaCosta Kaufmann, which posits that 'cultural change originates from a central cultural source of innovation and is then spread'.²⁹ More specifically, by establishing the seventeenth and eighteenth

25 Existing works that have begun this process include Evonne Levy, *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque*, Berkeley 2004. Levy addresses the Counter-Reformation in Poland-Lithuania in detail in Chapter 1.

26 Building on recent works such as Susan Dackerman, ed., *Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, New Haven 2011.

27 Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Court, Cloister & City: The Art and Culture of Central Europe 1450–1800*, London 1995, p. 21; Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*, Chicago and London 2004, p. 186.

28 DaCosta Kaufmann, 1995, p. 15.

29 DaCosta Kaufmann, 2004, p. 216. This quotation is taken from DaCosta Kaufmann's close analysis of the theory of diffusionism and the notion of diffusion; see *Ibid.*, pp. 187–216. Diffusionism has also informed the analysis of wider topics pertinent to the present study,

centuries as a Central European age of contemplation and commemoration, I reposition the focus of existing scholarship on *memento mori* artwork in particular, identifying Poland-Lithuania as one of the key early modern perpetuators of such iconography and also as a visual innovator within this field. To this end, my work builds upon recent anglophone literature specifically concerned with Central European art history, for example studies carried out following the discovery of Baroque *vanitas* wall paintings in the crypt beneath the Church of the Nativity of Our Lord in Prague, and Jeannie Łabno's monograph on Polish Renaissance funerary monuments.³⁰ A focused single work such as Łabno's on the plethora of surviving Polish-Lithuanian Baroque funerary monuments remains to be written, however, and it is not the aim of the present study to look at this type of art production exhaustively. Moreover, while these recent publications have favoured a catalogue-based approach to record individual examples, focusing in detail upon isolated phenomena within Central European cultures of death, I will instead synthesise a diverse body of artistic material previously omitted from international scholarship in order to interrogate a range of visual themes.

This book is divided into five chapters, each dealing with a separate aspect of Polish-Lithuanian *memento mori* culture. In the first chapter, 'Frameworks for Visual Cultures of Death in Poland-Lithuania', I assess why, when Western Europe had an established iconography of Death dating back to the Middle Ages, religious and private patrons in Poland-Lithuania only began to commission commemorative and macabre artworks *en masse* in the seventeenth century. This framing chapter provides an overview of key patronage groups within the Commonwealth, from members of the *szlachta* (nobility) to wealthy burghers, and discusses specific social, political and religious structures that emerged within the new Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and contributed

such as the dissemination of architectural models by the Jesuit Order and the influence of the Italian Renaissance upon European architecture; see Levy, 2004, pp. 185–187; Earl Rosenthal, 'The Diffusion of the Italian Renaissance Style in Western European Art', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, ix, no. 4, 1978, pp. 33–45. More broadly, the diffusionist approach informed the early development of art historical scholarship, including the work of Alois Riegl (1858–1905) and Rudolf Wittkower (1901–1971). See Rudolf Wittkower, 'Eagle and Serpent. A Study in the Migration of Symbols', *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, ii, no. 4, April 1939, pp. 293–325; Alois Riegl, *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament*, tr. Evelyn Kain, Princeton 1992.

- 30 Petr Bašta and Markéta Baštová *et al.*, *Ars Moriendi: The Loreto Crypts. From the History of Burying in the Capuchin Convents*, tr. Rosana Murcott, Prague 2012; Jeannie Łabno, *Commemorating the Polish Renaissance Child: Funeral Monuments and their European Context*, Farnham 2011.

to a heightened interest in visual cultures of death. I also discuss the cultural impact of the Counter-Reformation, as well as the importance of Central Europe's early modern print trade in the circulation of death-related iconography, and evaluate specific social traumas such as warfare and plague as potential contributors to wider preoccupations with death.

The second chapter, 'Death Personified: the Skeleton and the Printed Image', focuses upon two artistic themes by which Death was personified in Central Europe: the contemplative skeleton and the Triumph of Death. I situate this discussion within the context of the expansion of the print trade across early modern Europe and discuss the ways in which Polish-Lithuanian artists contributed to and benefited from increased access to graphic imagery. In particular, I focus upon the impact of illustrated anatomical treatises in the artistic transmission of iconographies of death, thus proposing tangible links between medical and art history in Central Europe.

The third chapter, 'The Dance of Death in Central Europe: Indigenous Variations on a Familiar Theme', investigates the major macabre motif of the Dance of Death, in which cadavers or skeletons are shown intermingling with individuals of varying ecclesiastical and secular rank. In order to account for the rapid and unprecedented uptake of this theme in Poland-Lithuania from the seventeenth century, I discuss the contribution of the Catholic mendicant (or 'begging') orders to the dissemination of *memento mori* themes. I also continue to analyse the ways in which such artworks adopted and adapted graphic prototypes that circulated throughout Europe at this time.

The fourth chapter, 'Triumphant Funerals: Ceremonial, Coffin Portraits and Catafalques', focuses closely upon commemorative practices in the Commonwealth. Here, I draw upon a variety of visual sources as well as sermons and funerary literature in order to reconstruct key features of the ephemeral burial culture of Poland-Lithuania. Building on the discussion of patronage in Chapter 1, I examine ways in which wealthy burghers developed elaborate ceremonial practices in imitation of the *szlachta*. I also place funerary artworks such as the coffin portrait in a theological context in order to analyse contemporaneous attitudes to death and the afterlife inherent in such personal yet display-orientated commissions.

The desire for ostentatious commemoration and an emphasis upon the public contemplation of death were united in prominent elements of architectural and landscape design, as discussed in the final chapter: 'Architectures and Landscapes of Death: Funerary Chapels and Jerusalem Sites'. Examining examples of both noble and burgher patronage, I analyse the development and symbolism of domed funerary chapels in Poland-Lithuania and the iconography of their often intricate decorative schemes. I draw parallels between the widespread

fashion for such mausolea in the Commonwealth and the contemporaneous endowment of monumental Jerusalem sites which transplanted this type of chapel architecture to ambitious pilgrimage venues. Drawing upon vernacular sources such as poetry and Passion plays, I assess the ways in which architectures and landscapes of death visually bridged the gap between private commemoration and popular devotion.

Frameworks for Visual Cultures of Death in Poland-Lithuania

• • •

Woe betide you, masters, who consider your serfs
to be dogs and so cruelly repress them.
Ah, in what bondage you will find yourselves
Once you depart from this world.¹

• •

This warning about Death's annihilation of earthly power, written by Klemens Bolesławiusz (c. 1625–1689) in his frequently-republished poem *Przeraźliwe echo trąby ostatecznej* ('The Dreadful Echo of the Final Trumpet'), first published in Poznań in 1670, is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it is representative of a popular genre of vernacular eschatological texts, frequently accompanied by edifying illustrations, which enjoyed wide circulation in printed form during the existence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Providing both a devotional and iconographical context for the creation of larger religious artworks discussed in this chapter, these publications followed in the footsteps of the earliest printed vernacular didactic literature to appear in Polish, such as Jan Karten's treatise on the Four Last Things (death, the Last Judgement, heaven, and hell), published in Kraków in 1562.² The authors of many texts of this type were Catholic preachers and members of the numerous religious orders active in Poland-Lithuania, who harnessed the power of the printing press to enhance their reputations as well as to reach a wider audience; Klemens Bolesławiusz, for example, was a Reformed Franciscan,³ while Jan Karten was a Carmelite friar.

1 'Biada, panowie, co poddanych macie/ Za psy i onych okrutnie ściskacie./ Ach, w jakiej sami niewoli będziecie/ Po tym tu świecie'. See Mrozowski, 2000, p. 110. For the full text, see Klemens Bolesławiusz, *Przeraźliwe echo trąby ostatecznej*, ed. Jacek Sokolski, Warsaw 2004. For Bolesławiusz (or Boleslavius), see also Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, vol. XIII, Kraków 1894, pp. 241–243.

2 Jan Karten, *O Czterech ostatecznych rzeczach, księgi czwory*, Kraków 1562. See also Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, vol. XIX, Kraków 1903, p. 160; Mrozowski, 2000, p. 90.

3 For the Reformed Franciscans (the *Reformati*) in Poland-Lithuania and the Counter-Reformation, see Waldemar Kowalski, 'From the "Land of Diverse Sects" to National Religion:

The second reason that Bolesławiusz's verses are pertinent to the present study is that they shed light on the strict hierarchical stratification within Polish-Lithuanian society,⁴ which played a crucial role in influencing the lay patrons who invested with particular vigour in commemorative practices. Home to one of early modern Europe's largest noble classes relative to the size of the population – around nine percent by the mid-seventeenth century⁵ – the Commonwealth has sometimes been defined as a 'Republic of Nobles'.⁶ Seeking to establish the frameworks that supported the emergence of pronounced visual cultures of death in Poland-Lithuania, this chapter begins by assessing the motivations of such key patronage groups, focusing on the powerful *szlachta* (usually translated as 'nobility', but sometimes divided into the sub-groups of magnates and gentry⁷), as well as those wealthy burghers who aspired to emulate the nobility. It is the specific social structure of the Commonwealth, within which the elected monarch was *primus inter pares* in relation to the politically-engaged nobility,⁸ which helped foster the extensive uptake of distinctive visual cultures of death throughout its vast territories.

Moving on to consider further frameworks for the development of complex cultures of death in Poland-Lithuania, this chapter will investigate additional factors that encouraged the unprecedented production of *memento mori* artwork at this time. It will do this by outlining several contributors to this phenomenon, including the cultural impact of the Counter-Reformation in the Commonwealth and the development of the print trade in Central Europe. The potential implications of increased mortality as a result of warfare and plague will also be considered, raising questions about the ways in which

Converts to Catholicism and Reformed Franciscans in Early Modern Poland', *Church History*, LXX, no. 3, September 2001, pp. 482–526.

- 4 Paul Robert Magocsi identified several distinct estates (*stany*) that defined Polish society in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: the crown, the nobility, the clergy, the townspeople, the Jews and the peasants. Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, Toronto 1996, p. 140.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 142. This statistic does not account for regional demographical variations, however. In the Kingdom of Poland's recently-acquired Ukrainian territories, for example, the nobility only constituted two percent of the overall population. Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999*, New Haven and London 2003, p. 112.
- 6 J.K. Fedorowicz, ed., *A Republic of Nobles: Studies in Polish History to 1864*, Cambridge 1982.
- 7 Magnates (who constituted at most one percent of the *szlachta* estate in the mid-seventeenth century) enjoyed great wealth and often served as powerful statesmen. By contrast, the lower members of the *szlachta* (sometimes referred to as gentry) enjoyed the political privileges of their estate, but often had a far more modest lifestyle. Magocsi, 1996, p. 142.
- 8 For the Polish-Lithuanian monarchy, see Richard Butterwick, ed., *The Polish-Lithuanian Monarchy in European Context, c. 1500–1795*, Basingstoke 2001.

religious artworks drew upon common experiences of violent and painful death to spread wider messages about penance and salvation.

A central aim throughout this chapter is to identify the audiences for which death-related artwork was created, ranging from those directly involved in the process of commissioning, such as the nobility or burghers, to the wider spectrum of church-goers at whom didactic macabre artwork was aimed, but who had no choices over its production and little control over their own encounters with it. To this end, each section of the following analysis will discuss specific examples from both visual and literary sources, covering a wide geographical remit within the former territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Artistic Patronage in Poland-Lithuania

Lay groups, especially the *szlachta*, were highly engaged in the patronage of death-related art in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. While the fiscal variation within the nobility meant that many of its members were neither able, nor interested (according to some contemporaneous sources) to invest in 'high' art, their cultural aspirations found an alternative and very public outlet in ceremonial and pageantry. This resulted in significant and widespread commissioning of funerary and commemorative art, a trend that was subsequently imitated by emerging social groups, notably affluent burghers who aspired to established *szlachta* signifiers. These two lay groups, therefore, encouraged in their conspicuous patronage by the Catholic Church in particular, deserve specific attention on account of their role in initiating and sustaining fervent visual cultures of death within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

In terms of artistic appreciation, the elites of Poland and Lithuania had some catching up to do by the time of the Union, by some accounts. It is telling that, when adapting Baldassare Castiglione's influential *Il cortegiano* ('The Book of the Courtier', first published in Venice in 1528) for a Polish audience, Łukasz Górnicki (1527–1603)⁹ removed the references to art present in the original text. A fictional script of informal discussions between royal courtiers and those of the Bishop of Kraków, Samuel Maciejowski (1499–1550),¹⁰ *Dworzanin polski* ('The Polish Courtier', 1566) is set in a villa near the then-capital city

9 For Łukasz Górnicki, see Roman Pollak, 'Górnicki Łukasz', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, VIII, 1959–60, pp. 427–428.

10 For Samuel Maciejowski, see Włodzimierz Dworzaczek, 'Maciejowski Samuel h. Ciołek', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XIX, 1974, pp. 64–69.

of Kraków on a sunny afternoon in 1549. While Castiglione's Urbino courtiers debated the relative merits of painting and sculpture, with reference to the work of Raphael and Michelangelo respectively,¹¹ the Kraków and Padua-educated Górnicki, who had first-hand experience of Bishop Maciejowski's courtly life, implied by omission that a knowledge of art was not necessary for the ideal Polish courtier. Instead, he confined aesthetic references to a detailed discussion of fashionable dress.¹² While Raphael could find support and fame in his native Urbino, it seems that indigenous artistic practitioners in Poland, from painters to printmakers, were hampered both by the lack of a developed workshop system to train artists and the reluctance of patrons to recognise and promote home-grown talent. Ceding the responsibility for artistic production to more respected professionals further afield, it became the norm in Poland, and subsequently Poland-Lithuania, to commission itinerant painters, sculptors and architects, in particular those from Italy, Germany and the Netherlands, to fill the vacuum left by a neglected local artistic sector.

The largest potential patronage group in Poland-Lithuania, whose lifestyles 'The Polish Courtier' reflected, were the main landowning class: the *szlachta*. Many members of the *szlachta* claimed to trace their roots to the Sarmatians, an ancient nomadic tribe of Iranian origin¹³ – in effect, distancing themselves in ethnic terms from the other estates – and their social distinction was visually manifested in the use of a *herb* (coat of arms), which would usually be associated with more than one family, thus creating a sense of affiliation to a defined group.¹⁴ In Poland, the *szlachta* estate had been traditionally bound to provide military service at times of national crisis and, as a mark of this commitment, it had been granted increasing political privileges which, by the time of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, included the right to elect the king.¹⁵

11 Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, tr. George Bull, London 2003, pp. 96–101.

12 See Łukasz Górnicki, *Dworzanin polski*, ed. Roman Pollak, Wrocław 1954, pp. 161–166.

13 For the Sarmatians and Polish-Lithuanian culture, see Aleksandra Koutny-Jones, 'Echoes of the East: Glimpses of the "Orient" in British and Polish-Lithuanian Portraiture of the Eighteenth Century', in Richard Unger ed., *Britain and Poland-Lithuania: Contact and Comparison from the Middle Ages to 1795*, Leiden and Boston 2008, pp. 408–410.

14 See Mieczysław Paszkiewicz and Jerzy Kulczycki, *Herby rodów polskich/Polish Coats of Arms*, London 1990.

15 Noble privileges had first been granted in Poland in the late Middle Ages, and this practice continued into the period in question. Among the most important privileges was the Statute of *Nihil Novi* ('Nothing New' 1505), which increased the political powers of the *szlachta* by placing the Sejm (Parliament) in control of legislation. Taking this type of liberty to its ultimate conclusion, the *liberum veto* (first used in 1652) gave individual envoys the ability to halt proceedings. For the *szlachta* concept of liberty, see Anna

Kings of Poland served as Grand Dukes of Lithuania, and the Lithuanians also benefitted from noble privileges as much as the Poles within the Commonwealth, which ensured a degree of geographical parity across its political system.¹⁶ In fact, with Polish as the dominant language among the Lithuanian as well as the Polish nobility, and many of the originally Orthodox Lithuanian elite eventually converting to Calvinism or Catholicism, the boundaries between the Kingdom and the Grand Duchy became blurred, creating what Timothy Snyder has termed 'a republic of the gentry, whose myth of Sarmatian origin included nobles of various origins and religions, and excluded everyone else'.¹⁷ According to a timeframe proposed by historian Stanisław Kutrzeba, this period of 'noble domination' lasted from 1572 to 1795,¹⁸ so for the majority of the existence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Although the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the rise of the increasingly powerful *szlachta* within a strongly hierarchical society, even within this group there was a noticeable stratification. The most powerful members of the estate, often referred to as magnates, saw themselves as separate from the rest and some sought to trace their ancestry to the Ancient Romans, rather than the more obscure Sarmatians. Many of this *crème de la crème* were highly educated and culturally proactive, such as Łukasz Opaliński (1612–1662), who is thought to have written the first Polish architectural treatise.¹⁹ At the opposite end of the spectrum were those poorer members of the estate

Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, *Queen Liberty: The Concept of Freedom in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, Leiden 2012; Benedict Wagner-Rundell, *Common Wealth, Common Good: The Politics of Virtue in Early Modern Poland-Lithuania*, Oxford 2015, pp. 4–10.

- 16 For the active involvement of the Lithuanian nobility in political life, see Artūras Vasiliauskas, 'The Practice of Citizenship among the Lithuanian Nobility, ca. 1580–1630', in Karin Friedrich and Barbara M. Pendzich eds., *Citizenship and Identity in a Multinational Commonwealth: Poland-Lithuania in Context, 1550–1772*, Leiden and Boston 2009, pp. 71–102.
- 17 Snyder 2003, p. 22. For the artistic legacy of this social group within the framework of 'Sarmatian' culture, see Joanna Dziubkova, ed., *Szlachetne dziedzictwo czy przekłety spadek. Tradycje sarmackie w sztuce i kulturze*, exhibition catalogue, Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu 11 November 2004–27 February 2005, Poznań 2004.
- 18 Stanisław Kutrzeba, *Historia ustroju Polski w zarysie*. Korona, Warsaw 1949, p. 11.
- 19 The opulent burials of Łukasz Opaliński's family are discussed in Chapter 4. His treatise was entitled 'A short science of building of courts, palaces, and castles according to the sky and customs of Poland'. See Łukasz Opaliński (attributed), *Krotka Nauka Budownicza Dworow, Pálacow, Zamkow podług Niebà y zwyczajù Polskiego*, Kraków 1659; DaCosta Kaufmann, 2004, p. 35. See also Stanisław Grzeszczuk, 'Opaliński Łukasz z Bnina h. Łódzia, pseud. Paulus Naeocelus, Paulo Nicolai', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, xxiv, 1979, pp. 93–96.

who were nobles in name only, their lifestyle bearing little resemblance to that of the wealthiest *szlachta*. They had little opportunity to become patrons of art, as the prolific Polish poet Wespazjan Kochowski (1633–1700)²⁰ acknowledged in *Budynek* ('The Building'):

[...] my walls are not graced
By a new Rubensian landscape,
Few images are on display
And no masterpiece by [Tommaso] Dolabella [...]²¹

While Kochowski's noble narrator has an awareness of the desirability of fine art – which, in his view, should be Flemish or Italian – he does not have the means to acquire this for himself and, yet, he is not remorseful. For such members of the *szlachta*, this book will argue, religious celebration and commemoration of death became the great cultural equaliser during the period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Even the poorest nobles recognised the importance of flaunting any remaining wealth as well as their dynastic and heraldic credentials at the moment of death, which led them to organise opulent funerals that shared some of the splendour and theatricality of royal burials. Given the considerable number of extended family members attending any such funeral, these religious ceremonies and the raucous festivities that followed constituted one of the main social activities for well-connected members of the *szlachta*.

In the vernacular architectural treatise of 1659 ascribed to him, the aforementioned Łukasz Opaliński categorised Poland as primarily a rural state in which the landed elite enjoy ample space in the countryside to build sizable residences, in contrast to foreign countries where, the author claims, people choose to live in overcrowded towns.²² The reality in Poland-Lithuania, however, was more complex than he would have us believe. While members of the *szlachta* were partial to country living, where they enjoyed more direct control over their estates, key cities across the Commonwealth were emerging as

20 For the works of Wespazjan Kochowski, see Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, vol. XIX, Kraków 1903, pp. 377–382. See also Franciszek Bielak and Roman Pollak, 'Kochowski Wespazjan h. Nieczuja', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XIII, 1967–1968, pp. 218–220.

21 Tommaso Dolabella (c. 1570–1650), who had worked in Venice, was one of many Italian artists active in Poland-Lithuania. '[...] Choć nic wisi lanczoft nowy,/ Na mej ścienie Rubensowy,/ Kunterfetów też nie wiele,/ I nie dziło Dollabele [...]'. See Wespazjan Kochowski, *Wespazjana Kochowskiego wojskiego krakowskiego pisma wierszem i prozą*, Kraków 1859, pp. 267–268.

22 Opaliński (attributed), 1659, p. A3 recto.

important regional centres for trade, creating a class of affluent burghers who developed their own priorities as patrons and became active in commissioning commemorative artworks such as coffin portraits. This explains the growth of multiple centres of artistic production in a range of cities, including Poland's consecutive capitals – first Kraków and then, by the early seventeenth century, Warsaw²³ – as well as the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius, and key trading centres such as Poznań and the prosperous Hanseatic cities of Toruń (Thorn) and Gdańsk (Danzig). Within territories now in Ukraine the large city of Lviv, merits particular attention, as does artistic production in the smaller Grodno, now Hrodna in Belarus. Of these settlements, all but Toruń found recognition for their municipal status by inclusion in Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg's vast city atlas *Civitates orbis terrarum* ('Cities of the World'), published in several illustrated volumes during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, which indicated the contemporaneous significance of these settlements within a pan-European context.²⁴ In this widely-circulated publication, for example, Lviv is lauded as 'a very big trade city' which has 'very noble and friendly burghers'.²⁵ It is such clusters of emerging urban patrons, keen to adopt and adapt elite cultures of death to visually manifest their new-found status, that are of particular interest to the present study.

Despite the perceived differences between the elites of the cities and countryside of Poland-Lithuania, one patronage group was equally active in both during the existence of the Commonwealth: the Catholic Church. In the wake of the Union of Lublin, Catholic influences spread steadily into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and territories now in Ukraine, where the dominant Christian confession had traditionally been Orthodoxy, contributing to some degree of religious parity throughout the Commonwealth. There was an unavoidable overlap between the interests of individual Catholic patrons and lay patronage groups, however, given that many high-ranking churchmen with the power to commission artwork were also bound by dynastic affiliations as members of the *szlachta*. One example, already mentioned in the introduction, is that of Piotr Myszkowski, the sixteenth-century Bishop of Kraków

23 The precise timing of the relocation of Poland's capital is disputed, with dates generally ranging from 1596 to 1611 (by which time the royal residence had been moved to Warsaw), although Kraków was still frequently referred to as a 'capital city' long after this. See F.W. Carter, *Trade and Urban Development in Poland: An Economic Geography of Cracow, from its Origins to 1795*, Cambridge 1994, pp. 185–188.

24 See Stephan Füßel, ed., *Cities of the World: Complete Edition of the Colour Plates of 1572–1617*, Cologne 2011, p. 182 (Gdańsk); pp. 194–195 (Hrodna); pp. 257 and 260–261 (Vilnius); pp. 473–475 (Warsaw); pp. 476–477 (Poznań); pp. 479–481 (Kraków); pp. 484–485 (Lviv).

25 As quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 484.

interred in one of the earliest and most lavish family mausolea erected in Poland-Lithuania. The refined upbringing of such well-connected churchmen complemented their formal religious training when representing the Church at the highest level. Another man of the cloth with an exalted *szlachta* lineage, the Jesuit-educated Cardinal Bernard Maciejowski (1548–1608),²⁶ for instance, engaged in global diplomacy on behalf of the newly-formed Commonwealth when he had the lavishly-illuminated thirteenth-century Morgan Picture Bible presented to ‘Abbās I (Shah of Iran from 1588 to 1629), thus cleverly cementing powerful alliances with a piece of exquisite religious artwork.’²⁷ Like Piotr Myszkowski, Bernard Maciejowski was laid to rest in splendour with members of his dynasty – among them his uncle, Bishop Samuel Maciejowski, immortalised in ‘The Polish Courtier’ – in an opulent mausoleum in Kraków that spoke as much of familial allegiances as religious persuasions.²⁸

Encouraged in their patronage priorities by the Catholic Church, therefore, the *szlachta* and burghers of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth focused much of their investment upon the artistic commemoration of death. This visual culture took wide-ranging forms, from funerary trappings to individual monuments and family tomb chapels. It was here that social status and heraldic credentials, as well as religious affiliations, were most overtly expressed, creating a cultural forum for the cementing of dynastic ties as well as an opportunity for individual self-fashioning.

The Commonwealth and the Counter-Reformation

Although Catholics made up less than half of the population of Poland-Lithuania,²⁹ the vigour of the Catholic Church was a central factor in the

26 See Jan Dziegielewski and Jarema Maciszewski, ‘Maciejowski Bernard h. Ciołek’, *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XIX, 1974, pp. 48–52.

27 For this French medieval Bible, commissioned by Louis IX of France, see William Noel and Daniel Weiss, eds., *The Book of Kings: Art, War, and the Morgan Library's Medieval Picture Bible*, London 2002.

28 For the Maciejowski Chapel at Wawel Cathedral, see Łoziński, 1973, pp. 62–63.

29 In 1772, the various Christian confessions in Poland-Lithuania made up the following percentages of the overall population: Roman Catholics (43%), Uniates (Greek Catholics of the Slavonic Rite; 33%), Russian Orthodox (10%), Protestants (4% – these were mainly Lutherans). 9% of the population was Jewish, making up the largest non-Christian group. Statistics from Norman Davies, *God's Playground. A History of Poland*, vol. 1, *The Origins to 1795*, Oxford 2005, p. 127.

dissemination of distinct visual cultures of death across a vast area.³⁰ Powerful churchmen such as the aforementioned Bernard Maciejowski spearheaded the revitalisation and strengthening of Catholicism within the Commonwealth at a time when confessional heterogeneity was perceived as a threat to the unity of this disparate fledgling state. During his time as Bishop of Łuck (now Lutsk in Ukraine), Maciejowski was closely involved in negotiating the Union of Brest of 1596, which sought to bring Orthodox Christians of Poland-Lithuania's Ruthenian lands under the rule of the Roman Catholic Church – albeit with the continuation of their Eastern rites – a process of religious homogenisation that created the Uniate Church and was strongly opposed by many members of the Orthodox lay elite, particularly in Ukrainian territories.³¹ In fact, as historian Serhii Plokhy has argued, even among the new Uniates, the Roman Catholic Church remained negatively associated with Poland, being perceived as ‘closely linked not only to Polish identity but also to the nobiliary stratum, since it was often Polish or Polonized nobles who encouraged the conversion of their Ruthenian subjects to Catholicism’.³² The drive for Church union was only one of several measures undertaken to assert the supremacy of the Catholic Church in the multi-confessional Commonwealth, however. Efforts were also made to curb the influence of Protestantism, for example, which had impacted upon both Catholic and Orthodox communities in Poland and Lithuania.³³ This included the spread of

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- 30 For a study of Counter-Reformation iconography, including printed images which circulated throughout Europe, see: John B. Kipping, *Iconography of the Counter Reformation in the Netherlands: Heaven on earth*, 2 vols., Nieuwkoop 1974. For the impact of the Counter-Reformation on Polish art, see: Lidia Kwiatkowska-Frejlich, *Sztuka w służbie kontrreformacji*, Lublin 1998.
- 31 For the Union of Brest, see Ryszard Łużny, Franciszek Ziejka, and Andrzej Kępiński, *Unia brzeska: geneza, dzieje i konsekwencje w kulturze narodów słowiańskich*, Kraków 1994; Magocsi, 1996, pp. 164–169; Serhii Plokhy, *The Cossacks and Religion in Early Modern Ukraine*, Oxford 2001, pp. 77–86.
- 32 Serhii Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus*, Cambridge 2006, p. 314.
- 33 By the 1560s Orthodox priests in Lviv were remarking upon the spread of Protestantism among their religious community. Plokhy, 2001, p. 149. The work of historian Janusz Tazbir is particularly prominent in the field of Polish Reformation and Counter-Reformation studies. See Janusz Tazbir, *Reformacja – kontrreformacja – tolerancja*, Wrocław 1999; Janusz Tazbir, *Reformacja w Polsce. Szkice o ludziach i doktrynie*, Warsaw 1993; Janusz Tazbir, *Reformation, Counter Reformation, Tolerance. A Condensed Version from the Original Text*, tr. and ed. Teresa and Andrew Ramsden, Horsham 2003. For the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in western Poland, see also Jolanta Dworaczek, *Reformacja i kontrreformacja w Wielkopolsce*, Poznań 1995. For the Reformation in Lithuania, see

Lutheran ideology in cities such as Gdańsk and Poznań³⁴ and the adoption of Calvinism by certain representatives of the noble estate, including members of Lithuania's powerful Radziwiłł family.³⁵

Against this fragmented confessional backdrop, Poland took a proactive role in the European Counter-Reformation following the Council of Trent (1545–63). It accepted the Council's decrees in 1564, which, among others, had outlined the positive role of artworks in reaffirming religious teaching.³⁶ Cardinal Stanisław Hozjusz (or Hosius, 1504–79)³⁷ was among the principal disseminators of the Catholic reform message in Poland, a process which also impacted upon the development of Catholicism in Lithuania post-1569.³⁸ Having acted as papal

Antanas Musteikis, *The Reformation in Lithuania: Religious Fluctuations in the Sixteenth Century*, Boulder 1988. For the European Counter-Reformation, see Arthur Geoffrey Dickens, *The Counter Reformation*, London 1968; R. Po-chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540–1770*, Cambridge 1998.

34 As Natalia Nowakowska has argued, Poland was 'a significant locus of Lutheranism in the reign of King Zygmunt I Jagiellon (1506–1548)'. Natalia Nowakowska, 'Forgetting Lutheranism: Historians and the Early Reformation in Poland (1517–48)', *Church History and Religious Culture*, XCII, 2012, p. 281.

35 Notably Mikołaj Radziwiłł 'the Black' (1515–1565). See Frick, 2013, p. 23.

36 Rudolf Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1600–1750*, vol. 1, *The Early Baroque 1600–1625*, New Haven and London 1999, p. 1. For the decrees of the Council of Trent, which were intended to reform the Roman Catholic Church and define its doctrinal position in response to the threat of Protestantism, see Henry Joseph Schroeder, tr., *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, Rockford, Illinois, 1978. For the Council of Trent, the nineteenth ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church, held in Trent in northern Italy, see Robert S.J. Bireley, 'Redefining Catholicism: Trent and Beyond', in R. Po-chia Hsia, ed., *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. VI, *Reform and Expansion 1500–1660*, Cambridge 2007, pp. 143–161.

37 See Waclaw Urban, 'Hozjusz (Hosius, Hosz, Hos, Hoze, Osius, Caligula, Cracovianus, Stanislaus de Cracovia) Stanisław', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, x, 1962–1964, pp. 42–46.

38 For the implementation of Tridentine reforms in Lithuania, see Wioletta Pawlikowska, 'The challenge of Trent and the renewal of the Catholic Church in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: the higher clergy of Vilnius and the problems of plural benefices and residence in the sixteenth century', *Bažnyčios Istorijos Studijos*, IV, 2011, pp. 37–56. While Lithuania was one of the last states in Europe to adopt Roman Catholicism, in the late fourteenth century, Poland had done so in the tenth century. For the adoption of Christianity in Poland, see Przemysław Urbańczyk and Stanisław Rosik, 'The kingdom of Poland, with an Appendix on Polabia and Pomerania between paganism and Christianity', in Nora Berend, ed., *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Central Europe, Scandinavia and Rus'*, c. 950–c. 1200, Cambridge 2007, pp. 263–318. For a history of Lithuania before its adoption of Christianity, see S.C. Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending: A Pagan Empire within East-Central Europe, 1295–1345*, Cambridge 2014.

president during the final stages of the Council of Trent, the highly-educated Hozjusz, who had studied in Bologna and Padua as well as Kraków, showed determination in fighting Protestantism and strengthening Catholicism.³⁹ One way in which this was done was by expanding the influence of the religious orders: most importantly, Hozjusz introduced the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) to Poland in 1564, which was to play a significant role in conversions to Catholicism.⁴⁰ Jesuit colleges soon appeared across the territories of Poland and Lithuania, many of which were established by powerful members of the clerical elite imbued with Counter-Reformation zeal, among them Bernard Maciejowski who supported the foundation of such a college in Lublin. Some Jesuit colleges expanded to become leading European centres of learning, notably the *Academia et Universitas Vilnensis Societatis Jesu* (Jesuit Academy and University in Vilnius), founded in the 1570s, which was home to Lithuania's largest library and played a pivotal role in the Commonwealth's growing print trade.⁴¹ The numerous Jesuit colleges of Poland-Lithuania catered for the educational aspirations of the wealthy elites, as shown in several of the case studies in this book, as well as providing a constant supply of learned clergymen. It was this new generation of highly-educated preachers who led a return to what historian Jerzy Kłoczowski termed the 'vital forces'⁴² of late medieval Christianity through their growing emphasis upon death and the Devil in their public proselytising.⁴³

Two aspects of Jesuit teaching made a considerable contribution to the shaping of cultural attitudes towards death in Central as well as Western Europe.⁴⁴ Firstly, the contemplation of death was encouraged in the influential Jesuit meditation manual, the *Exercitia spiritualia* ('Spiritual Exercises'), first published in Rome in 1548 by the founder of the order, Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556; canonized 1622).⁴⁵ Loyola's assertion that one should 'bring to memory death

39 Po-chia Hsia, 1998, pp. 62–63.

40 For the religious orders and conversions to Catholicism in early modern Poland, see Kowalski, 2001. For the religious and cultural significance of the Jesuits, see Thomas Worcester, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, Cambridge 2008.

41 The Jesuit College in Vilnius was founded in 1570, a year after the introduction of the Jesuits to Vilnius, and was established as an academy in 1579 by King Stefan Batory. For the Vilnius Academy and printmaking, see Jolanta Talbierska, *Grafika XVII wieku w Polsce. Funkcje, ośrodki, artyści, dzieła*, Warsaw 2011, pp. 89–102.

42 Jerzy Kłoczowski, *A History of Polish Christianity*, Cambridge 2000, p. 152.

43 Ibid., p. 154.

44 For the impact of the Jesuits upon Polish culture, see Ludwik Grzebień and Stanisław Obirk, eds., *Jezuici a kultura polska*, Kraków 1993.

45 For Loyola, see Philip Caraman, *Ignatius Loyola*, London 1994; John Patrick Donnelly, *Ignatius of Loyola: Founder of the Jesuits*, New York and London 2004.

and judgment'⁴⁶ is understood to have contributed to a renewed interest in themes of mortality in European art, especially since he advocated that such reflections could involve holding a skull.⁴⁷ In Poland-Lithuania, the widespread influence of Loyola's instructions was reflected in staple Catholic devotional artworks such as paintings of St Jerome or St Francis meditating upon a skull (Fig. 2).⁴⁸ Furthermore, surviving Polish-Lithuanian examples of the related macabre motif of the 'Melancholy Death', in which a contemplative skeleton is depicted, demonstrate a broader association between death and contemplation during the period of the Commonwealth, while pilgrimage practice at Jerusalem sites was also informed by Loyola's teachings on the Passion of Christ.⁴⁹

A second key way in which the Jesuit Order contributed to the proliferation of eschatological themes in artwork was through its defence of the doctrine of purgatory, a concept whose validity, as well as the intercession for the dead that it encouraged, had been undermined by Lutheran and Calvinist teaching alike.⁵⁰ Art historian Émile Mâle proposed that the renewed Catholic emphasis

46 Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, tr. Michael Ivens, Gloucester 2004, p. 28.

47 In his study of the iconography of Western European Catholic art following the Council of Trent, art historian Émile Mâle identified the Jesuits and the Spiritual Exercises in particular as contributing to the development of death imagery in painting and sculpture. See Émile Mâle, *L'art religieux après le Concile de Trente*, Paris 1932, pp. 203–227. The Jesuits also re-introduced medieval ideas about death through their religious theatre; for example, a production based upon the 'Dance of Death' was acted out at the Jesuit grammar school in Ingolstadt in Bavaria in 1606. See Michael A. Mullett, *The Catholic Reformation*, London and New York 1999, pp. 205–206. For Jesuits and Baroque theatre, see Rudolf Wittkower and Irma B. Jaffe, *Baroque Art. The Jesuit Contribution*, New York 1972, pp. 99–110.

48 Fig. 2 shows a wall painting of St Jerome (1691–4), which decorates one of the pendentives at the domed funerary chapel of the Kotowskis in Warsaw; this chapel is discussed further in Chapter 5. Paintings of St Francis meditating upon a skull include one example attributed to the prolific Kraków-born artist Szymon Czechowicz (1689–1775), who had trained in Rome, in the parish church of St John the Baptist in the village of Gnojno, south-east of Kielce. For Szymon Czechowicz see Helena d' Abancourt, 'Czechowicz Szymon', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, IV, 1938, pp. 312–313; Jan K. Ostrowski and Jerzy T. Petrus, eds., *Podhorce. Dzieje wnętrz pałacowych i galerii obrazów*, Kraków 2001, pp. 31–42.

49 The 'Melancholy Death' is discussed in Chapter 2. Polish-Lithuanian Jerusalem sites are discussed in Chapter 5.

50 Craig Koslofsky's discussion of purgatory within the context of the German Reformation is particularly useful. See Craig M. Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450–1700*, Basingstoke and New York 2000, pp. 19–39. For the development of the doctrine of purgatory, see Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, tr. Arthur Goldhammer, Chicago 1984. For changes in attitudes to death as a result of the Reformation, see also Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England*, Oxford 2002.



FIGURE 2 *Anonymous artist, St Jerome holding a skull, 1691–4, Kotowski Chapel, Dominican Church, Warsaw.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

upon purgatory following the Council of Trent resulted in the popularisation of the artistic motif of souls trapped in the purgatorial flames,⁵¹ an emotive theme meant to encourage prayers from the living that gained popularity in Poland-Lithuania as much as in other parts of Catholic Europe.⁵² Such depictions proliferated in monumental artworks and illustrations for printed books across the Commonwealth. Among its most ambitious renditions is a mid-seventeenth century wall painting on the east wall of the so-called Royal Chapel (1646–53) erected for the Radzik burgher family at the parish church in Kazimierz Dolny (Fig. 3).⁵³ Executed in pastel hues, it shows the Virgin Mary interceding for souls in purgatory, to whom a rosary is offered as a means of



FIGURE 3 *Anonymous artist, The Virgin Mary interceding for souls in purgatory, mid. 17th century, Royal Chapel (Chapel of the Radzik burgher family), Parish Church, Kazimierz Dolny.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

51 Mâle, 1932, pp. 58–65.

52 For a comprehensive study of purgatory in Polish Baroque art, see Krystyna Moisan-Jabłońska, *Obraz czyśćca w sztuce polskiego baroku. Studium ikonograficzno-ikonologiczne*, Warsaw 1995.

53 For the painting, see Krystyna Moisan-Jabłońska, *Obrazowanie walki dobra ze złem*, Kraków 2002, p. 638. For the architecture of the Royal Chapel, see Karpowicz, 1991, p. 51.

escape. Menacingly close, however, is a depiction of the maw of hell, below which is an instructive inscription:

A Warning
Serve God faithfully, love His Mother
And you will escape the maw of the dragon of hell.⁵⁴

In Polish-Lithuanian printed works, the souls in purgatory motif was thought particularly appropriate as an illustration to masses for the dead, and this theme was also sometimes embroidered on the appropriate liturgical vestments.⁵⁵ More unusually, the iconography of purgatory was used to decorate caskets known as *skarbony duchowne* (spiritual treasures), which contained dice or cards with numbers prompting the user to say a prayer for specific trapped souls.⁵⁶ The belief that the time spent in purgatory could be reduced with help from the living found its most ostentatious expression in the building of tomb chapels, however, where prayers and masses would be said specifically for the souls of the wealthy deceased.⁵⁷

Alongside the Jesuits, other longer-established Catholic religious orders flourished in the Commonwealth and this study highlights the contribution made by these often-overlooked religious communities to artistic production in the post-Tridentine period.⁵⁸ It was especially the mendicant orders, for example, whose members embraced an ascetic lifestyle and worked in the community, who encouraged the use of death-related iconography in their artistic commissions. These included the Observant Franciscans (known in Poland-Lithuania as the Bernardines), who had arrived in Poland in 1453 and followed the example of Saint Bernardine of Siena (1380–1444).⁵⁹ Another

54 'Przestroga/ Słusz Bogu Wiernie Kochaj Matkę jego,/ A Ujdiesz Paszczy Smoka Piekelnego'.

55 See Mrozowski, 2000, pp. 132–133; and pp. 136 and 138.

56 For Polish spiritual treasures, see Krystyna Moisan-Jabłońska, 'Skarbony duchowne – zapomniana forma dewocji doby baroku', *Barok*, VI, no. 2 (12), 1999, pp. 125–136.

57 Chapter 5 analyses the distinctive architecture of these dynastic mausolea, which enjoyed striking popularity throughout Poland-Lithuania.

58 While studies of Counter-Reformation Poland have often prioritised the newly-introduced Jesuits, Piotr Stolarski has recently argued for a reassessment of the contribution made to Catholic renewal by the established religious orders. See Piotr Stolarski, *Friars on the Frontier: Catholic Renewal and the Dominican Order in Southeastern Poland, 1594–1648*, Farnham 2010, pp. 5–6 and 8–12.

59 For the Franciscan Order, see John Richard Humpidge Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order: from its Origins to the Year 1517*, Oxford 1968. For the Observant Franciscans in Poland,

branch of the Franciscans that deserves mention is the austere Capuchin Order founded by the Observant friar Matteo da Bascio (1495–1552), whose elaborate crypt decorated with the bones of the deceased at the Capuchin church in Rome is perhaps the best known expression of this order's emphasis upon the contemplation of death.⁶⁰ Preoccupations with mortality were also espoused by the mendicant Augustinian Order, which followed the teaching of St Augustine of Hippo (354–430 AD), whose first friary in Poland had been established in Kraków in the 1370s.⁶¹ As the networks of these diverse orders became embedded across Poland-Lithuania, the Commonwealth emerged as Central Europe's predominant centre for such religious communities, which played a prominent role in local Catholic renewal.⁶² The development of new religious sites was only made possible, however, by the devotional priorities of the wealthy laity, who patronised the building of new churches and, in exceptional circumstances, whole religious landscapes.⁶³

This combination of local patronage with the transnational profile of the religious orders was a powerful one in terms of artistic transmission, enabling visual models to be transferred directly from Western Europe to even the easternmost outposts of Central Europe. A key example from the Grand

see Małgorzata Maciszewska, *Klasztor bernardyński w społeczeństwie polskim 1453–1530*, Warsaw 2001; Wiesław Franciszek Murawiec and Damian A. Muskus, eds., *Pięćset pięćdziesiąt lat obecności oo. Bernardynów w Polsce (1453–2003)*, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska 2006.

60 Polish-Lithuanian examples of the macabre Dance of Death motif commissioned by the Observant Franciscans and Capuchins will be examined in Chapter 3. For the Capuchin crypt in Rome, see Father Carmine Antonio De Filippis *et al.*, *The Capuchin Museum*, Rome 2012, pp. 146–159. For the Capuchin Order, which gained papal recognition in 1528, see Father Cuthbert, *The Capuchins: a Contribution to the History of the Counter-Reformation*, 2 vols., London 1928; Duncan Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Medieval Franciscan Order: from Saint Francis to the Foundation of the Capuchins*, Rome 1987. In 1680 Pope Innocent XI gave permission for the Capuchins to build two friaries in Poland, one of which would be in Kraków. For a history of the Capuchin Order in Poland, see Józef Marecki and Roland Prejs, *Zarys historii kapucynów w Polsce*, Kraków 2004.

61 An important death-related artwork known as the 'Wheel of Death', executed for the Kraków Augustinians, will be assessed in Chapter 2. For the Rule the Augustinian Order, see Luc Verheijen, *La Règle de saint Augustin*, 2 vols, Paris 1967.

62 The Observant Franciscans were especially influential in the conversion of Protestants and other non-Catholics during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Po-chia Hsia, 1998, p. 64. For the post-Tridentine reform of the Franciscans in Poland, see Wiesław Franciszek Murawiec, *Reforma potrydencka zakonu braci mniejszych w Polsce (w. XVI–XVIII)*, Kraków 1990.

63 A notable example of such a patron was magnate Mikołaj Zebrzydowski (1553–1620), whose involvement in establishing the vast Observant Franciscan pilgrimage site of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Duchy of Lithuania is the domed Jesuit Corpus Christi Church within the lavish residential complex of Nieśwież (now Nesvizh in central Belarus, southwest of Minsk), the seat of the influential Radziwiłł family.⁶⁴ Founded by Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł (1549–1616)⁶⁵ and used as the family mausoleum,⁶⁶ this early copy of Il Gesù in Rome (1568–1584), begun little more than a couple of years after the consecration of this flagship Jesuit church, was designed by the Italian Jesuit architect Giovanni Maria Bernardoni (1541–1605).⁶⁷ Despite its remote location, the Corpus Christi Church at Nesvizh (Fig. 4) was one of



FIGURE 4 *Giovanni Maria Bernardoni*, Jesuit Corpus Christi Church (mausoleum of the Radziwiłł family) as seen in an early twentieth-century postcard, begun 1586, Nesvizh.

PHOTOGRAPH: BIBLIOTEKA NARODOWA, WARSAW

- 64 For the Corpus Christi Church at Nesvizh (or Niasvizh), see Jerzy Paszenda, 'Kościół Bożego Ciała (pojezuicki) w Nieświeżu', *Kwartalnik architektury i urbanistyki*, XXI, no. 3, 1976, pp. 195–216.
- 65 Henryk Lulewicz, 'Radziwiłł Mikołaj Krzysztof zwany Sierotką h. Trąby', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XXX, 1987, pp. 349–361.
- 66 For the Corpus Christi Church at Nesvizh as a Radziwiłł mausoleum, see Artūras Tereškinas, *Imperfect Communities: Identity, Discourse and Nation in the Seventeenth-Century Grand Duchy of Lithuania*, Vilnius 2005, p. 212.
- 67 Bernardoni worked at Nesvizh between 1586 and 1599. For the design of Il Gesù, see Wittkower and Jaffe, 1972, pp. 15–28. For Bernardoni, see Stanisław Bednarski T.J., 'Bernardoni Jan Maria', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, I, 1935, pp. 461–462.

Poland-Lithuania's first and most impressive religious buildings conceived in the Baroque style. As such, it is an important indication of the pivotal role that individual religious orders played in the development of artistic and architectural forms in Poland-Lithuania following the Council of Trent. This example from Belarus also supports the broader conclusions made by art historian Evonne Levy in her revisionist study of the Jesuit Baroque in which she states that architecture became 'the most visible mark of the diffusion of the Society and of Catholicism worldwide in the early modern period'.⁶⁸ Most importantly for the purposes of the present study, however, the cutting-edge design of Bernardoni's church at Nesvizh emphasises that geographical distance was no bar to stylistic development in the Commonwealth, since religious and artistic networks as well as the aesthetic aspirations of well-connected patrons served to bridge the physical gap between the Rzeczpospolita and other European states. The Catholic Church, therefore, in particular its widespread network of religious orders, was not only essential to the rapid dispersion of death-related themes in art and architecture across the Commonwealth, but was also capable of supporting the development of new centres of artistic innovation.

The Central European Printing Revolution

Much of Central Europe has been overlooked in studies of early modern printing, among them some of the major works on European print culture.⁶⁹ This is despite the fact that the first established printing press in Poland is recorded as early as 1473 in Kraków,⁷⁰ placing this city 'amongst the European forerunners of the printing craft'.⁷¹ Other robust printing centres in Polish and Lithuanian territories included Gdańsk and Vilnius (especially its Jesuit Academy and University), as well as Lviv, Poznań and Warsaw, as highlighted in a recent monograph by art historian Jolanta Talbierska.⁷² In addition, printing presses were used in smaller but culturally-proactive centres, for

68 Levy, 2004, p. 185.

69 Including Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 2012. For the printing industry in Poland, see Janina W. Hoskins, 'PRINTING: in Poland's Golden Age', *The Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*, XXIII, no. 3, July 1966, pp. 204–218.

70 Talbierska, 2011, p. 33.

71 Carter, 1994, p. 326.

72 For Talbierska's detailed study of printmaking in seventeenth-century Poland, see Talbierska, 2011.

example the abovementioned Nesvizh. The local production of printed texts and images (both woodcuts and intaglio prints such as engravings), together with the associated trade in foreign books and graphic art, was a key factor in linking Poland-Lithuania to pan-European networks of cultural exchange.⁷³ It also enabled the unprecedented dissemination of vernacular texts within the territories of the Commonwealth, including the sermons and tracts on death-related topics that have been central to the preparation of the present study. Although publications in Lithuanian had appeared by the late 1540s,⁷⁴ Polish was to emerge as the dominant vernacular language for printed works in the Commonwealth. While this suggests a degree of cultural parity across this composite state, the print trade ultimately contributed to the sidelining of Lithuania's traditional languages of learning, Church and Chancery Slavonic, as Timothy Snyder has argued.⁷⁵ Consequently, the early modern printed works referenced in this book are largely in Polish or Latin, or a mixture of the two, regardless of whether they were published in Poland or Lithuania.

Prior to the advent of printing, explicitly death-related imagery had rarely been seen in Polish or Lithuanian book production. While Passion iconography had been commissioned for some late medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, the appearance of such depictions was sporadic and these luxury items were only available to an elite group of very wealthy patrons, generally for their own private devotional use. Examples of relevant manuscript illuminations produced in Kraków include full-page miniatures of the Man of Sorrows in the prayer books of King Aleksander Jagiellon (1461–1506), produced in 1491,⁷⁶

73 Publishers in Poland-Lithuania were significantly quicker than their Hungarian counterparts, for example, at producing their own editions of major Western European emblem books. See Éva Knapp and Gábor Tüskés, *Emblematics in Hungary: A Study of the History of Symbolic Representation in Renaissance and Baroque Literature*, tr. András Török and Zsuzsa Boronkay, Tübingen 2003, p. 84.

74 See Jūratė Kiaupienė, 'The Grand Duchy and the Grand Dukes of Lithuania in the Sixteenth Century: Reflections on the Lithuanian Political Nation and the Union of Lublin', in Richard Butterwick, ed. *The Polish-Lithuanian Monarchy in European Context, c. 1500–1795*, Basingstoke 2001, p. 87. However, David Frick has argued that, by the seventeenth century, the increased use of Polish in Lithuanian cities meant that monolingual Lithuanian speakers were to be found largely in the countryside. By contrast, approximately eighty-five percent of seventeenth-century written sources relating to the burghers of Vilnius are in Polish. Frick, 2013, pp. xxiii and 6.

75 Snyder 2003, pp. 18–21.

76 British Library Add MS 38603, folio 15 verso. Commissioned a decade before Aleksander Jagiellon became king of Poland, the prayer book is attributed to scribe and illuminator Jan

and King Zygmunt I Jagiellon (1467–1548), dated 1524.⁷⁷ Late medieval macabre themes, however, such as the Triumph of Death or the Three Living and the Three Dead, did not enjoy the popularity in Poland or Lithuania that they did in Western Europe.⁷⁸

Printing was crucial to the belated uptake of *memento mori* imagery within what was to become Poland-Lithuania, a process to which indigenous authors made a significant contribution. *Ars moriendi* treatises advising on the ‘craft of dying’ were among the earliest death-related publications by Polish writers to circulate in printed form. Examples include that attributed to the Kraków-born and educated theologian and philosopher ‘Mateusz of Kraków’ (Mathaeus de Cracovia, c. 1345–1410),⁷⁹ who later taught at the universities of Prague and Heidelberg, which first appeared as a block book and was written in Latin for a learned audience.⁸⁰ Providing instruction on how to ensure a good, Christian death, such treatises lent themselves to simple, didactic woodcut imagery, for example depictions of devils fighting for the soul of a dying individual. By the seventeenth century, texts of this type published in Poland-Lithuania were appearing in the vernacular, such as Jan Januszowski’s (1550–1613)⁸¹ *Nauka umierania chrześcijańskiego* (‘Instruction on a Christian Death’), first published

Złotkowski (fl. 1468–1494). For this prayer book, see Magdalena Piwocka and Dariusz Nowacki, eds., *Wawel 1000–2000*, vol. 1, exhibition catalogue, Zamek Królewski na Wawelu and Muzeum Katedralne na Wawelu, Kraków May–September 2000, Kraków 2000, p. 89. See also Fryderyk Papée, ‘Aleksander Jagiellończyk’, *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 1, 1935, pp. 58–61.

77 British Library Add MS 15281. It was executed by painter and illuminator Stanisław Samostrzelnik (c. 1480–1541). For this prayer book, see Piwocka and Nowacki, 2000, pp. 93–95. For Zygmunt I Jagiellon, see Andrzej Wyczański, *Zygmunt Stary*, Warsaw 1985.

78 The Triumph of Death and the Three Living and the Three Dead will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively.

79 See Władysław Seńko, ‘Mateusz z Krakowa’, *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, xx, 1975, pp. 196–198.

80 Mateusz of Kraków’s *Ars moriendi* (written c. 1408–10) was first printed as a block-book c. 1440. See Maciej Włodarski, *Ars moriendi w literaturze polskiej xv i xvi w.*, Kraków 1987, pp. 23–56. For an extensive study of Polish death-related literature, including *Ars moriendi* treatises, see: Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa, *Sarmaci i śmierć. O staropolskiej poezji żałobnej*, Warsaw 1992. See also Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa, *Pieśni czasu śmierci. Studium z historii duchowości xvi–xviii wieku*, Lublin 1992. For a broader history of the *Ars moriendi*, see Mary Catharine O’Connor, *The Art of Dying Well: the Development of the Ars Moriendi*, New York 1942.

81 For the Kraków-based publisher and writer Jan Januszowski, who had studied in Padua, see Alodia Kawecka-Gryczowa, ‘Januszowski Jan Łazarzowic’, *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, x, 1962–1964, pp. 598–600.

in Kraków in 1604 and illustrated with a woodcut showing Christ in attendance at the deathbed (Fig. 5).⁸² During the seventeenth century a wider range of vernacular publications on eschatological themes was printed in the Commonwealth and the most successful appeared in several editions. One of these was Klemens Bolesławiusz's emotively-worded poem on the Four Last Things with which this chapter began, which was republished several times in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Bolesławiusz's work was uncompromising in its combined use of text and image to harness the reader's fear of death, with the aim of encouraging people to make preparations for their own demise. The crude woodcuts in this publication provide a vivid visual critique of wordly



FIGURE 5 *Anonymous artist, Christ in attendance at the deathbed in: Jan Januszowski, Nauka umierania chrześcijańskiego, Kraków 1604.*

PHOTOGRAPH: BIBLIOTEKA NARODOWA, WARSAW

82 Jan Januszowski, *Nauka umierania chrześcijańskiego*, Kraków 1604, p. 140. See also Mrozowski, 2000, pp. 94–95. For Jan Januszowski, see Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, vol. XVIII, Kraków 1901, pp. 475–481; Justyna Kiliańczyk-Zięba, *Czcionką i piórem. Jan Januszowski w roli pisarza i tłumacza*, Kraków 2007.



FIGURE 6

Anonymous artist, Purgatory: punishment for greed in: Klemens Bolesławiusz, Przeróżliwe echo trąby ostatecznej, Poznań 1726.

PHOTOGRAPH: BIBLIOTEKA NARODOWA, WARSAW

sins and the posthumous torture of those who commit them. Those who had been greedy in life, for example, are represented by a soul who is fed hot coals whilst being engulfed by flames (Fig. 6).⁸³ The impact of such graphic images of a personalised purgatory upon monumental church artwork can be seen in an eighteenth-century wall painting preserved in the western entrance corridor to the Church of the Holy Spirit in Vilnius (Fig. 7).⁸⁴

Whilst printed books made written and visual material on various topics available to wider audiences (albeit only the wealthier and more learned elites), this was not the only way that the printing revolution contributed to the spread of death-related themes within the Commonwealth. Equally important was

83 See Mrozowski, 2000, p. 28.

84 This forms part of a series of three eighteenth-century wall paintings in the western entrance corridor to the Church of the Holy Spirit in Vilnius. On the south side of the corridor, nearest the door, is a shrouded figure of Death (see Fig. 8) while in the centre is an image of resurrection at the Last Judgement, showing a naked figure emerging from a grave. The soul in purgatory is at the northern end of the corridor. The series is notable for its emphasis upon a personal experience of death.



FIGURE 7

Anonymous artist, Soul in purgatory, 18th century, western entrance corridor, Church of the Holy Spirit, Vilnius.

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

the reliance of many artists within Poland-Lithuania upon newly-accessible graphic imagery – whether plates from books or single-leaf prints produced either abroad or in the Commonwealth – for use as prototypes for larger commissions. Although artists across Europe collected drawings, prints and even paintings to use as models, the employment of printed prototypes was particularly pronounced in the Commonwealth where, as stated earlier, there had been a degree of underinvestment in the training of indigenous artists. In those Polish-Lithuanian institutions which did nurture home-grown talent, notably the religious orders, it was the norm for resident artists to seek inspiration in graphic imagery for the devotional works they produced.⁸⁵ This widespread over-reliance upon printed models, however, could result in works of art that lacked verisimilitude, especially when textual captions from their graphic prototypes were painstakingly reproduced, as seen in seventeenth-century *Ars moriendi* paintings⁸⁶ as well as Dances of Death. More generally, the practice likely dissuaded some Polish-Lithuanian painters from improving their skills as

85 The output of one such painter, Observant Franciscan friar Franciszek Lekszycki, is discussed in Chapter 3.

86 For three such seventeenth-century paintings from Polish churches, see Mrozowski, 2000, pp. 123, 125 and 126.

draughtsmen and hampered their potential to develop original solutions for their own commissions, thus perpetuating the existing problems with artistic achievement in the Commonwealth.

Some Central European artworks dealing with themes of mortality were highly innovative, however, despite their reliance upon printed imagery. A key example from outside the Commonwealth is the recently-discovered crypt beneath the Church of the Nativity of Our Lord at the Loreto pilgrimage site in Prague.⁸⁷ The grisaille wall paintings dealing with death and resurrection that decorate this burial place of the Loreto's benefactors were executed in 1664 by an unknown artist, possibly a Capuchin,⁸⁸ who drew upon a variety of graphic prototypes, mainly from the Netherlands. The resulting iconographic programme mimics the appearance of prints particularly well due to its monochromatic execution. It includes a scene of the Raising of Lazarus that recalls an etching by Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669) and a depiction of a putto resting upon a skull and blowing bubbles after an engraving by Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617), as well as representations of Chronos (the bearded male personification of Time) and a skeletal Death wielding a bow and arrow modelled upon an engraving by Boetius à Bolswert (1580–1633).⁸⁹ A comparable and contemporaneous Polish decorative scheme that adapts a range of Western European *memento mori* prototypes is that of the Oleśnicki Funerary Chapel in the village of Tarłów in south-east Poland, which combines macabre themes such as the Dance and Wheel of Death.⁹⁰ Alongside the Prague crypt, whose artistic execution it eclipses, the stucco programme at Tarłów is one of the most significant examples of the creative reception of graphic prototypes in Central European art.

The role of graphic art in the development of Polish-Lithuanian visual cultures of death has frequently been understated, partly due to the historic lack of systematic studies of the impact of the Commonwealth's print trade. It is clear, however, that major early modern printing centres emerged in cities such as Kraków, Vilnius, Warsaw, Gdańsk, Lviv and Poznań. This contributed to the embedding of preoccupations with mortality in two ways: it ensured the

87 The patron of the Prague Loreto in the early 1660s was Countess Elisabeth Apollonia of Kolowrat. For the crypt, which was discovered in 2011 and is not open to the public, see Bašta and Baštová, 2012.

88 For the hypothesis that the artist may have been a Capuchin, see *Ibid.*, pp. 64–66.

89 For the murals in the crypt beneath the Church of the Nativity of Our Lord and their graphic prototypes, see *Ibid.*, pp. 26–76.

90 The decoration of the Oleśnicki Funerary Chapel will be discussed in Chapter 5. For the most recent study and complete photographic record of the Oleśnicki stucco programme, see Aleksandra Koutny-Jones, 'A Noble Death: The Seventeenth-Century Oleśnicki Funerary Chapel in Tarłów', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, LXXII, 2009, pp. 169–205.

wider availability of death-related literature in Central Europe, often in the vernacular, and also enabled the dissemination of illustrated material and single-leaf prints for use as prototypes for larger artworks, as seen in both painting and sculpture. As such, the Central European printing revolution was fundamental in forging strong links between the visual cultures of Poland-Lithuania and the rest of Europe and, more specifically, the resulting circulation of eschatological and macabre imagery helped to synchronise the iconographies of death across the continent.

Plague and Warfare

Studies of death in medieval Europe have sometimes linked the increased uptake of eschatological and macabre iconography with historical experiences of mass mortality such as disease and warfare. Unlike much of Europe in the Middle Ages, however, Poland enjoyed a comparative growth in prosperity and avoided the worst of the medieval plagues⁹¹ that, elsewhere, in the words of Elina Gertsman 'unquestionably [...] contributed to the popularity of the macabre and especially to its dramatic message of the inevitable and equalising nature of death'.⁹² Yet, factors such as epidemics and warfare, especially when these occurred simultaneously, as was often the case, do appear to have contributed to the belated popularity of death-related artwork within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.⁹³ Historian Karl-Erik Frandsen in his

91 See Henryk Samsonowicz, *Złota jesień polskiego średniowiecza*, Warsaw 1971; Tadeusz Chrzanowski, 'Śmierć w dawnej sztuce polskiej (refleksje i odczucia)', *Ateneum Kapłańskie*, xciv, no. 3, 1980, pp. 424 and 427. For Poland in the Middle Ages, see Nora Berend, Przemysław Urbańczyk and Przemysław Wiszewski, *Central Europe in the High Middle Ages: Bohemia, Hungary and Poland, c. 900–c. 1300*, Cambridge 2013.

92 Elina Gertsman, 'Visualizing Death: Medieval Plagues and the Macabre', in Franco Mormando and Thomas Worcester eds., *Piety and Plague: From Byzantium to the Baroque*, Kirksville 2007, p. 84. The most devastating late medieval plague epidemic, referred to as the Black Death, lasted from 1346 to 1350 and stripped whole areas of Western Europe of around a third of their population. For the Black Death and Western European art, see also Binski, 1996, pp. 126–129; Phillip Lindley, 'The Black Death and English Art. A Debate and Some Assumptions', in Mark Ormrod and Phillip Lindley eds., *The Black Death in England*, Stamford 1996, pp. 124–146; Millard Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death*, Princeton 1951; Henk van Os, 'The Black Death and Sienese Painting: a problem of interpretation', *Art History*, iv, no. 3, September 1981, pp. 237–249.

93 Chrzanowski, 1980, pp. 424 and 427; Aleksandra Koutny, 'Krieg und Gewalt in der barocken Memento-mori-Ikonographie Polens', tr. Berthold Kress, in Uli Wunderlich ed., *L'art*

recent monograph on plague in the Baltic region, for example, has indicated that the period 1652–1663 was particularly traumatic for citizens of Poland-Lithuania, with epidemics of plague, typhoid fever and the smallpox coinciding with widespread military conflict within the Commonwealth's borders.⁹⁴ It is in the aftermath of such catastrophic events in the mid-seventeenth century that some of the earliest and most ambitious Polish-Lithuanian *memento mori* paintings were produced, as will be discussed below.

Further significant outbreaks of plague and other epidemics in the early eighteenth century, again coinciding with military unrest, resulted in severe death tolls in the large cities of Warsaw, Kraków, Lviv, Poznań and Vilnius.⁹⁵ In the last of these, over 30,000 people are thought to have died in one year alone (1709–1710) and epidemics continued to ravage the Lithuanian capital until 1713, with the additional impact of famine increasing the pressure on religious institutions to cater for an unprecedented number of burials.⁹⁶ Artistic responses to the loss of life in eighteenth-century Vilnius include a mid-eighteenth century painting on display at the Catholic Church of St Peter and St Paul in Vilnius that depicts the 1710 plague.⁹⁷ Showing a skeletal Death with a scythe standing alongside a pile of corpses, this served as a direct reminder to the local congregation of a specific catastrophe in Lithuanian history which was likely to have affected them personally. Also potentially linked to Lithuania's early eighteenth-century epidemics is a monumental wall painting of a skeletal Death dressed in a regal red shroud at the western entrance to the Church of the Holy Spirit in Vilnius, which greets all who enter and leave (Fig. 8). It is in the expansive crypt of this Dominican-founded church that a considerable number of well-preserved bodies of plague victims from the period are thought to be interred.

The impact of warfare presents a more widespread and highly compelling case for changes to artistic practices in early modern Central Europe. Thomas Da Costa Kaufmann has drawn attention to the variegated repercussions of the

macabre 7: Jahrbuch der Europäischen Totentanz-Vereinigung, Düsseldorf 2006, pp. 95–106.

94 Karl-Erik Frandsen, *The Last Plague in the Baltic Region, 1709–1713*, Copenhagen 2010, p. 20.

95 30,000 burials took place in Warsaw in 1707–1710 and 20,000 also died of plague around this time in Kraków; around 10,000 plague deaths are recorded in Lviv in 1704–1705 (this amounting to around 40 percent of the population); in Poznań there were 9,000 deaths in 1708–1712. Statistics from *Ibid.*, p. 20.

96 *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21.

97 For this painting, see Dalia Tarandaitė, ed., *Sacred Art of Lithuania: Painting. Sculpture. Graphic: 14th-early 20th c.*, exhibition catalogue, Lithuanian Art Museum in Vilnius 2003, Vilnius 2003, p. 145.



FIGURE 8 *Anonymous artist, Death in a red shroud at the pulpit, 18th century, western entrance corridor, Church of the Holy Spirit, Vilnius.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) on Central European culture⁹⁸ and, while Poland-Lithuania was spared the effects of this much-discussed conflict, military engagements later in the seventeenth century and also in the eighteenth century are thought to have had a tangible impact upon the Commonwealth's visual arts. The Swedish invasion of Poland-Lithuania (1655–1660), known as

⁹⁸ See Kaufmann, 1995, pp. 232–255.

the *Potop* or 'Deluge', has traditionally been considered a pivotal turning point in this regard. Art historian Tadeusz Chrzanowski, for example, proposed a broad link between seventeenth-century conflicts such as the *Potop* and an 'obsession' with death, whilst Jolanta Talbierska has argued that there was a revival in printmaking following the 'tragedy' of this Swedish invasion.⁹⁹ Crucially for the present study, the *Potop* resulted in widespread pillage and destruction, with cultural centres such as Warsaw and Kraków sustaining extensive damage. This resulted in many churches being rebuilt and redecorated, among them Kraków's Observant Franciscan church, for which a moralising Dance of Death painting was simultaneously commissioned.¹⁰⁰

As already mentioned, the Commonwealth suffered further blows in the eighteenth century with the Great Northern War of 1700–1721, during which Swedish and Russian forces came into conflict upon Polish-Lithuanian territories, leading to widespread devastation of the countryside as well as economic turbulence. As the eighteenth century progressed, Poland-Lithuania's power continued to be gradually eroded and in 1772, during the first of the three partitions, close to thirty percent of the Commonwealth's land was ceded to its neighbours. Poland-Lithuania's misfortunes culminated in the state's total obliteration during its third partition in 1795. In the same year, the Commonwealth's final Dance of Death cycle was completed at a cemetery chapel in Zambrów in north-west Poland, one scene of which appears to depict a hunter-turned-insurgent from the Kościuszko Uprising of 1794, wearing a distinctive fur-trimmed hat known as a *konfederatka* (Fig. 9), while another shows a skull with a soldier's hat and pistols. The Reverend Marcin Krajewski (1737–1809), a clergyman of noble birth who commissioned the Zambrów Dance of Death, had been a member of the *Komisja cywilno-wojskowa* (Civil-Military Commission) during the Kościuszko Uprising, making such images particularly relevant to him.¹⁰¹

99 For the effects of the Deluge and other conflicts on art of this period, see Chrzanowski, 1980, p. 431; Karpowicz, 1994, pp. 55–72; Talbierska, 2011, p. 191. For the Deluge, see Robert I. Frost, *After the Deluge: Poland-Lithuania and the Second Northern War, 1655–1660*, Cambridge 1993.

100 As discussed in Chapter 3.

101 For a comprehensive illustrated study of the Zambrów wall paintings, see Aleksandra Koutny-Jones, 'Preaching the Dance of Death: The Reverend Marcin Krajewski's Cemetery Chapel at Zambrów', in Mark Stocker and Phillip Lindley eds., *Tributes to Jean Michel Massing: Towards a Global Art History*, Turnhout 2015 (forthcoming). In researching the artwork at Zambrów, I benefited from the kind assistance of the Rev. Andrzej Polakowski of the Church of the Holy Trinity, Zambrów, who gave me private access to the cemetery chapel. For Marcin Krajewski's publications, see Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*,



FIGURE 9 *Anonymous artist, Death and the Hunter (an insurgent during the 1794 Kościuszko Uprising), 1795, north wall, Cemetery Chapel, Zambrów.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

Two mid seventeenth-century paintings executed for Polish Catholic churches by anonymous local artists betray particularly close associations between warfare and the macabre, as well as indicating a debt to Western European prints in depicting such themes. An *Allegory of Death* (Fig. 10) commissioned for the parish church in the village of Bodzanów, south-east of Kraków, and based upon a print by the German engraver Peter Isselburg (c. 1568–1630), for

vol. xx, Kraków 1905, pp. 201–202. Of particular interest is a publication that charts Krajewski's renovation work at Zambrów: Marcin Krajewski, *Zbiór napisów zambrowskiego kościoła*, Warsaw 1799. See also Zygmunt Gloger, *Encyklopedia staropolska ilustrowana*, vol. III, Warsaw 1902, p. 254. For the role of provincial preachers within wider political and social debates in late eighteenth-century Poland-Lithuania, see Richard Butterwick, 'Between Anti-Enlightenment and enlightened Catholicism: provincial preachers in late-eighteenth-century Poland-Lithuania', in Richard Butterwick, Simon Davies and Gabriel Sánchez Espinosa eds., *Peripheries of the Enlightenment*, Oxford 2008, pp. 201–228.

example, shows a crowned skeletal personification of Death as the fourth apocalyptic rider of the Book of Revelation (The Apocalypse 6. 8), as identified in the textual caption below:¹⁰²

And behold a pale horse, and he that sat upon him, his name was Death, and hell followed him. And power was given to him over the four parts of the earth, to kill with sword, with famine, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.¹⁰³

The skeletal rider, however, does not use a sword, but instead holds a bow and arrow in imitation of Isselburg's print (Fig. 11).¹⁰⁴ This is also particularly appropriate to the local context, since this was a familiar weapon in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Bows and arrows were employed in particular by Tatar cavalry during their raids on the eastern parts of the Commonwealth; they were also associated with the Ottomans¹⁰⁵ and were subsequently adopted by Polish-Lithuanian fighters. Since the Commonwealth was well-known for its reliance upon its cavalry, the choice of such a scene seems especially relevant to the local context.¹⁰⁶ The artist also adapted many of the costumes

102 Not 'chapter 16' as is erroneously written on the painting. For this painting, currently on display at the Archdiocesan Museum in Kraków, see Moisan-Jabłońska, 1995, pp. 154–155; Mrozowski, 2000, pp. 102–103; Koutny, 2006, pp. 95–98. For another seventeenth-century image of an equestrian Death included in a painting of the Last Judgement at the Convent of the Nuns of the Visitation in Kraków, see Moisan-Jabłońska, 2002, ill. 377. A Polish manuscript of 1644 also depicts Death riding a horse and killing a crowd of Carmelite brothers with its scythe; for this Carmelite Gradual illuminated by Stanisław from Stolec in the collections of the Carmelite monastery in Kraków (folio 275 verso), see Tadeusz Chrzanowski, *Graduat karmelitański z 1644 roku Stanisława ze Stolca*, Warsaw 1976.

103 'VIDI ET ECCE EQU[U]S PALLIDUS, ET QUI SEDEBAT SUPER EUM, NOMEN ILLI MORS/ ET INFERNUS SEQUEBATUR EUM ET DATA EST [ILLI] POTESTAS SUPER QUAT[T]UOR PARTES TERRAE INTERFICERE GLADIO FAME, [ET] MORTE ET BESTIIS TERRAE'.

104 Peter Isselburg's print is an illustration of Psalm 7. 13–14. See Friedrich W.H. Hollstein, *German Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts 1400–1700: Lambert Hopfer to Sebastian Jenet*, vol. xv A, Amsterdam 1986, p. 178.

105 For allegorical paintings showing Ottoman fighters armed with bows and arrows firing at members of Poland's religious communities, see Moisan-Jabłońska, 2002, illustrations 280–282.

106 For military tactics in the Commonwealth, see Wiesław Majewski, 'The Polish Art of War in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in J.K. Fedorowicz ed., *A Republic of Nobles: Studies in Polish History to 1864*, Cambridge 1982, pp. 179–197.

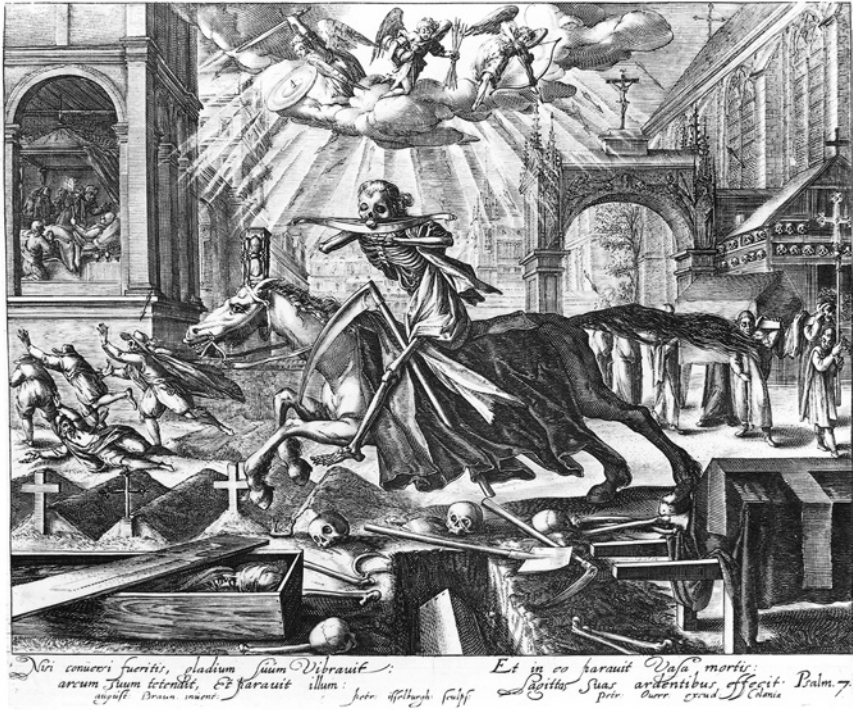


FIGURE 11 Peter Isselburg after Augustin Braun, Illustration of Psalm 7, before 1630.

PHOTOGRAPH: © ALBERTINA, VIENNA

to reflect indigenous fashions: to the left of the middle ground there is a scene of brutal fighting, with men attired in Polish-Lithuanian dress wielding sabres, another weapon typical of the Commonwealth. Those who die suddenly in this way have no time for the Last Sacrament (extreme unction) and so suffer a 'bad death' after which they cannot easily hope to go to heaven. In contrast, directly behind this battle is an example of a 'good death', of the type that was advocated in the *Ars moriendi* treatises discussed in the previous section. Within the safety of his house, a dying individual lies in bed holding a candle and is attended by a priest. Similarly, a funeral carried out in the proper Catholic manner, as seen in the background on the right, is preferable to the examples of unburied bones and hasty burial of wartime shown in the foreground. This didactic image adapts pan-European themes, therefore, to emphasise that the crucial processes of death and burial are best carried out with a full spiritual awareness which war does not allow.

The local social context is also strongly reflected in an allegorical painting entitled *The Bell of Death* (Fig. 12), c. 1650,¹⁰⁷ commissioned to fit above one of the nave archways in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Krosno in south-east Poland, a town that was depicted in Braun and Hogenberg's *Civitates orbis terrarum*.¹⁰⁸ A dense, composite image like the aforementioned *Allegory of Death*, it has at its centre a tree which represents the Tree of Life, the iconography of which harks back to St Bonaventure's theological treatise *Lignum vitae* of 1238–1257.¹⁰⁹ On the left is a skeletal Death holding an axe with which to cut down the Tree of Life, while devils in the maw of hell below help to pull down the tree with a rope. Death's axe hovers between the tree and a seated group of inebriated *szlachta* in their distinctive noble dress and indigenous shaved hairstyles, who are drinking, feasting and talking over one another at a round table that symbolises their constitutional equality. The reference to alcohol would have resonated strongly with the local congregation, given that Krosno was a trade centre for Hungarian wines,¹¹⁰ and the painting implies that those who indulge in this way ignore God at their peril. On the right, in turn, is a figure of Christ raising a hammer to strike a large bell that hangs from the tree, while the Virgin kneels in front of him in the role of intercessor; the tolling of the bell symbolises death, as the bells would be rung whenever a person in the parish died. This imminent ringing, which imbues the image with a sense of latent dread, is particularly effective in demonstrating how quickly death can occur, thus acting as a warning against an unexpected demise.

As in the *Allegory of Death*, a sudden or 'bad' death is associated in *The Bell of Death* with fierce military combat, referred to by a bloody battle scene to the right of Christ where indigenous weapons such as sabres are depicted. Although the unknown Polish artist likely imitated a seventeenth-century engraving (Fig. 13) by the Antwerp-based printmaker Jerome (or Hieronymous) Wierix (1553–1619)¹¹¹ when designing the central portion of the Krosno painting – a design also seen in the artwork of Eastern rite

107 Moisan-Jabłońska, 2002, p. 462; Mrozowski, 2000, pp. 98–99; Jerzy Szablowski, 'Ze studjów nad ikonografią śmierci w malarstwie polskiem XVII wieku', *Przegląd Powszechny*, CCI, January 1934, pp. 102–103.

108 See Füßel, 2011, pp. 476–477.

109 For the iconography of the Tree of Life, see Fritz Saxl, 'A Spiritual Encyclopaedia of the later Middle Ages', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, v, 1942, pp. 109–115.

110 For Krosno's importance as a trade centre, see Füßel, 2011, p. 477.

111 Moisan-Jabłońska, 2002, p. 462.



FIGURE 12 *Anonymous artist, The Bell of Death, c. 1650, Church of the Holy Trinity, Krosno.*
INSTYTUT SZTUKI POLSKIEJ AKADEMII NAUK, WARSAW, PHOTOGRAPH: W. WOLNY



FIGURE 13

Hieronymus Wierix after Hendrik van Balen, The Bell of Death, before 1619.

PHOTOGRAPH: © THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

churches in the region¹¹² – he adapted this prototype for a local context by including the battle scene and the depiction of *szlachta* gluttony. This elaboration may constitute a response to recent events in Krosno that would have been fresh in the minds of the congregation, notably the violent invasion of the town in 1657 by the army of György Rákóczi II (1621–1660), Prince of Transylvania.¹¹³ The border scenes with their distinct local costumes, furthermore, seem to imply a correlation between the reckless behaviour of the indulgent *szlachta* and the brutality of military combat, to which the seated noblemen appear oblivious. The painting may thus have been intended as a

112 For example on an eighteenth-century funerary banner depicting the *Bell of Death*, now in the Historical Museum in Sanok, which was used in an Orthodox or Uniate church. Other European artworks which imitate the same prototype include a painting of c. 1620 by an artist from the circle of Guercino at the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen (Bavarian State Painting Collections), and a 1653 painting by Ignacio de Ries in Segovia Cathedral. See Moisan-Jabłońska, 2002, p. 627; Mrozowski, 2000, p. 144.

113 Mrozowski, 2000, p. 100.

commentary upon the worsening fortunes of the Commonwealth, in which the *szlachta* – the most politically and militarily active estate – were seen to be implicated.

The wider relationship between social hardship and the macabre is also apparent in illustrated popular literature of the time, notably a seventeenth-century booklet entitled *Nędza z Biedą z Polski idą* ('Misery and Poverty come from Poland'), published anonymously in Kraków and frequently reissued.¹¹⁴ This social commentary candidly addresses specific problems such as penury and inequality. Written in the form of a versified script, it features a vivid female personification of Death who promises to attack people from all walks of life; this character is visualised in a crude woodcut depiction which shows an asexual skeleton brandishing both a scythe and a bow and arrows. In fact, macabre themes of this type were well-suited to the varied quality of artistic production in the Commonwealth, especially noticeable in the fields of print-making and painting. No matter what the skill of the artist, whether local and self-trained or invited from abroad to work in Poland-Lithuania, the promise of a ruthless leveller and the 'dreadful echo of the final trumpet', for which all must prepare, remained universally compelling.

While it is wise to maintain a cautious attitude to cultural causation,¹¹⁵ a compelling case can be made for links between Polish-Lithuanian *memento mori* artworks and social trauma in specific cases. These include skeletal depictions of Death executed in the wake of the 'unbreakable famine and cruel pestilence' that ravaged eighteenth-century Lithuania, to quote an appeal for aid made in London on behalf of British merchants based in the city of Kiejdanai (*Kėdainiai*),¹¹⁶ as well as eschatological paintings incorporating scenes of warfare from Polish parish churches. Of these, the Church of the Holy Trinity in Krosno stands out as an example of particular importance. It appears that, following the invasion of this town in 1657 by the Prince of Transylvania, three large eschatological artworks were commissioned for display in this prominent church, all of which included military iconography.¹¹⁷ More broadly, the vast

114 See Tadeusz Seweryn, *Staropolska grafika ludowa*, Warsaw 1956, pp. 123–125, 162 and 167. For later editions, see also Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, vol. XXIII, Kraków 1910, pp. 74–75.

115 As advocated by Paul Binski; see Introduction.

116 For this written appeal of 1730, see S.C. Rowell, 'The Face beneath the Snow: The Baltic Region in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *The Historical Journal*, XLIV, no. 2, 2001, p. 541.

117 As well as the abovementioned *Bell of Death*, a painting entitled *Memento mori* was executed for this church in the mid-seventeenth century. It combines the iconography of the

need for rebuilding following the Swedish invasion or *Potop* of the mid-seventeenth century had an unquestionable impact upon the architecture of Polish-Lithuanian churches as well as their decoration. With many medieval buildings having been destroyed and requiring reconstruction in the latest style, the religious landscape that rose from the ashes was overwhelmingly Baroque, an enforced stylistic cohesion that also gave expression to the Catholic Church's growing influence within the Commonwealth.

Conclusion

Visual cultures of death were primarily played out in a public forum in Poland-Lithuania. Artistic commissions were driven by the requirements of strong patronage groups within the Commonwealth's strictly hierarchical society, all of which desired their contemplation and commemoration to be conspicuously articulated. The most distinct of these was the *szlachta*, a noble class which was more vast and politically-engaged than the majority of its counterparts in other European states. The *szlachta*'s heraldic pedigree and sense of entitlement was expressed through lavish funerary traditions, which served as an equalising force among an otherwise fiscally-disparate estate. It was through the unlikely medium of death, in fact, that this elite group found its most consistent cultural expression. Hot on their heels were the aspirational burghers, who frequently took a lead from the *szlachta* when commissioning their own commemorative art, such as ornate funerary chapels. Binding a substantial proportion of these affluent groups was the Catholic Church, whose position in the expansive territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was strengthened by the efforts of the religious orders. These orders – especially the often-overlooked mendicant communities – acted as patrons of macabre art in their own right, but also elicited funding for larger commissions, such as Jerusalem sites, from the wealthy laity. As a result, such key patronage groups were fluid

Last Judgement with a depiction of a decaying corpse surrounded by cavalry soldiers and musketeers; the weapons shown include a distinctive mace known as a *buława*. For this painting, see Koutny, 2006, pp. 98–99; Moisan-Jabłońska, 2002, pp. 468–471; Mrozowski, 2000, pp. 100–101; Władysław Sarna, *Opis powiatu krośnieńskiego pod względem geograficzno-historycznym*, Przemyśl 1898, p. 274; Szablowski, 1934, pp. 94–97; Władysław Tomkiewicz, 'Aktualizm i aktualizacja w malarstwie polskim XVII wieku-11', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, vol. 13, nos. 2–3, 1951, pp. 45–46. A further mid-seventeenth century painting at the Church of the Holy Trinity in Krosno includes a scene of warfare amid a depiction of the Four Last Things. See Mrozowski, 2000, pp. 244–245; Sarna, 1898, p. 268.

rather than discrete, with many high-ranking clergymen, for example, belonging to the *szlachta* estate and sharing in this group's dynastic priorities.

Memento mori themes, which enjoyed unprecedented patronage in Poland and Lithuania during the existence of the Commonwealth, had few indigenous visual models upon which to draw. In this area of artistic production more than any other in the Commonwealth, the iconographic void was quickly filled with imported imagery from other parts of Europe where macabre motifs were already well-established. While the development of the Central European print trade was crucial in transmitting foreign prototypes for eschatological themes, the impetus to commission such artworks often derived from local experiences of mass mortality. In some cases, tangible links can be established between specific military engagements, or outbreaks of plague, and macabre artworks commissioned for public display in churches. It is evident that the revived Catholic Church of Poland-Lithuania was particularly keen to use death-related imagery in these instances to engage the emotions of its congregations and encourage them to eschew worldly preoccupations in favour of a life lived in the fear of Judgement and hell. Similarly, individual members of the Catholic clergy and religious orders harnessed the potential of the press to publish sermons and tracts on themes of mortality, with those that combined images with vernacular text delivering a particularly powerful didactic impact. In many cases, therefore, the contributory factors influencing the uptake of death-related art in the Commonwealth were not self-contained but intertwined, and it was a potent combination of these which resulted in the widespread phenomenon that this book deals with.

Considering artistic transmission as a geographical process, it is apparent that the pan-Commonwealth networks created by the *szlachta* and Catholic Church, and the frequent co-dependence of these, were vital in ensuring the uptake of new visual cultures of death across the vast and composite territories of Poland-Lithuania. These conduits for artistic enterprise brought the Commonwealth within wider European devotional structures whilst also ensuring the distinct cultural expression of this state's social makeup. The following chapters will consider the art and architecture of death that thrived within these frameworks, focusing upon different manifestations of contemplative and commemorative themes. The next two chapters deal mostly with macabre iconography, tracing the belated adoption and adaptation of didactic motifs within Poland-Lithuania, while the final two chapters will examine the development of indigenous commemorative and devotional practices, culminating in the largest and most opulent manifestations of the Commonwealth's overt preoccupation with mortality.

Death Personified: The Skeleton and the Printed Image

As emphasised in the previous chapter, the circulation of printed imagery was vital to the emergence of a Central European age of contemplation and commemoration in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Benefitting from the availability of graphic prototypes, regional artists were now equipped to explore the physical reality of death more directly than ever before, which coincided with an increased desire for such subject-matter among local patrons. In Poland-Lithuania, this marrying of purposes was particularly evident in one particular form of the personification of Death: its depiction as a human skeleton. These representations of death, rendered with increasing sophistication over the period discussed, began to dominate certain prominent commissions.

This chapter will explore a selection of the most important such artworks, ranging from stucco sculptures and elaborate metalwork to paintings and ornate liturgical vestments, which not only used the skeletal form as a commentary on life's brevity, encouraging the faithful to prepare for their inevitable demise and Judgement, but could acknowledge the elevated status of their patrons by alluding to humility and intellectual prowess. This chapter also considers the gendered dimension of Death in Polish-Lithuanian art, given that its representation in Western Europe during the medieval and early modern periods fluctuated between female and male. Art historian Jan Białostocki traced the influence of linguistic factors upon Death's personification, identifying correlations between the gender of the noun 'death' and its cultural representation in different European states.¹ While Italian and French depictions of a female Death can be contrasted with a male Death from northern Europe, however, it is striking that such a reflection of indigenous grammar was rarely present in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It will be shown here that, although 'death' is grammatically feminine in Polish (*śmierć*), the main language of Poland-Lithuania that concerns us for the purposes of this study, the widespread reliance of its portrayal in visual culture upon sources from outside

1 See Jan Białostocki, *Pleć śmierci*, Gdańsk 1999, pp. 12–24. For a broad study of the gender of Death in art and literature, see also Karl S. Guthke, *The Gender of Death. A Cultural History in Art and Literature*, Cambridge 1999.

the Commonwealth created a dissonance between its artistic manifestations and vernacular folklore.²

With no native iconographic traditions to draw upon, Polish-Lithuanian painters and sculptors attempting to personify Death in the early modern period were particularly influenced by imagery found in foreign woodcuts and engravings circulating in the early modern Commonwealth. In particular, the availability of illustrated anatomical treatises gave artists access to ever more accurate renderings of the human skeleton; while the earliest printed medical images of this type were crude woodcuts produced in the early 1490s, developments in printmaking techniques and the popularity of such depictions resulted in more sophisticated and accurate graphic models appearing during the sixteenth century.³ Illustrated publications such as this were also produced later in the Commonwealth, the most influential of which was that by the Gdańsk-based physician Johann Adam Kulmus (1689–1745), first published in 1722.⁴ As this chapter and the next will demonstrate, with a growing body of printed material providing abundant prototypes for macabre artworks, the image of Death in Central as well as Western Europe became ever more standardised.

This chapter seeks to identify a variety of modes for the representation of Death in the role of protagonist, which formed the focal point for individual artworks. It will look first at the Melancholy Death, in which a skeletal figure in the traditional pose of a melancholic suggests the emotional turmoil associated with human demise, before moving onto the more established allegory of the Triumph of Death, in which a victorious skeleton tramples upon signifiers of worldly power. Although rooted in European artistic traditions of the Middle Ages, Triumphs of Death appeared in Polish-Lithuanian artworks as well as indigenous printed illustrations only in the early modern period, a form of

2 For references to a female Death in Polish medieval literature, see Chapter 3. For Death personified as a woman in Lithuanian folklore, see Jonas Balys, *Mirtis ir laidotuvės: lietuvių liaudies tradicijos*, Silver Spring 1981.

3 A coloured woodcut produced in Nuremberg in 1493 is one of the earliest printed medical depictions of the human skeleton. See Peter Parshall and Rainer Schoch *et al.*, *Origins of European Printmaking: Fifteenth-Century Woodcuts and Their Public*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Art, Washington September–November 2005 and Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg December 2005–March 2006, Washington 2005, pp. 216–218. For a wider study of early anatomical publications see Andrea Carlino, *Books of the Body: Anatomical Ritual and Renaissance Learning*, Chicago and London, 1999.

4 See Johann Adam Kulmus, *Anatomische Tabellen*, Gdańsk 1722. See also Michael Sachs, 'Die "Anatomischen Tabellen" (1722) des Johann Adam Kulmus (1689–1745): Ein Lehrbuch für die (wund-)ärztliche Ausbildung im deutschen Sprachraum und in Japan', *Sudhoffs Archiv*, LXXXVI, no. 1, 2002, pp. 69–85.

delayed appropriation that is even more evident in the case of the Dance of Death theme that forms the focus of the next chapter.

As the concluding case study will show, locally-produced prints also played a vital role in influencing regional interpretations of Death's likeness. With Kraków emerging as one of Central Europe's major printing centres in the early modern period, as discussed in Chapter 1, its printing presses soon replicated not only established iconography such as the Triumph of Death, but also began to propagate more esoteric themes, among them the allegorical Wheel of Death. This type of innovation in graphic art, confirming Poland-Lithuania's pivotal role in the post-medieval development of the macabre in Central Europe, will be explored here in relation to a Wheel of Death painting at the Augustinian church in Kraków. With its roots in a range of printed imagery, including anatomical treatises and a seventeenth-century print executed by a leading Kraków-based printmaker, the Augustinian Wheel of Death betrays the self-perpetuation of personifications of Death in Polish-Lithuanian art, demonstrating how deeply such themes had become embedded in the visual culture of early modern Central Europe.

Anatomical Treatises and the Melancholy Death

The main European prototype for the depiction of a Melancholy Death, also influential in Poland-Lithuania, was an image of a contemplative skeleton holding a skull (Fig. 14) from the anatomical treatise *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem* ('On the Structure of the Human Body in Seven Books') by the Flemish surgeon-anatomist Andreas Vesalius (1514–1564), published in 1543 and 1555 in Basel by the leading printer Johannes Oporinus.⁵ This, the most artistically-influential European early printed anatomical treatise and one that is, consequently, relevant to several artworks discussed in this chapter, placed an emphasis upon the importance of human dissection.⁶ While

5 The second of these was a revised edition. For both editions, see Andreas Vesalius, *The Fabric of the Human Body: An Annotated Translation of the 1543 and 1555 Editions of 'De Humani Corporis Fabrica Libri Septem'*, tr. Daniel H. Garrison and Malcolm H. Hast, Basel 2014. For Johannes Oporinus, see Eisenstein, 2012, p. 202.

6 For Vesalius, see Charles Donald O'Malley, *Andreas Vesalius of Brussels, 1514–1564*, Berkeley 1964. For the illustrations to Vesalius' work, see Ludwig Choulant, *History and Bibliography of Anatomic Illustration*, tr. Mortimer Frank, New York 1945, pp. 168–199; Sachiko Kusukawa, 'The uses of pictures in the formation of learned knowledge: the cases of Leonhard Fuchs and Andreas Vesalius' in Sachiko Kusukawa and Ian Maclean, eds., *Transmitting Knowledge: Words, Images, and Instruments in Early Modern Europe*, Oxford, 2006, pp. 73–96.

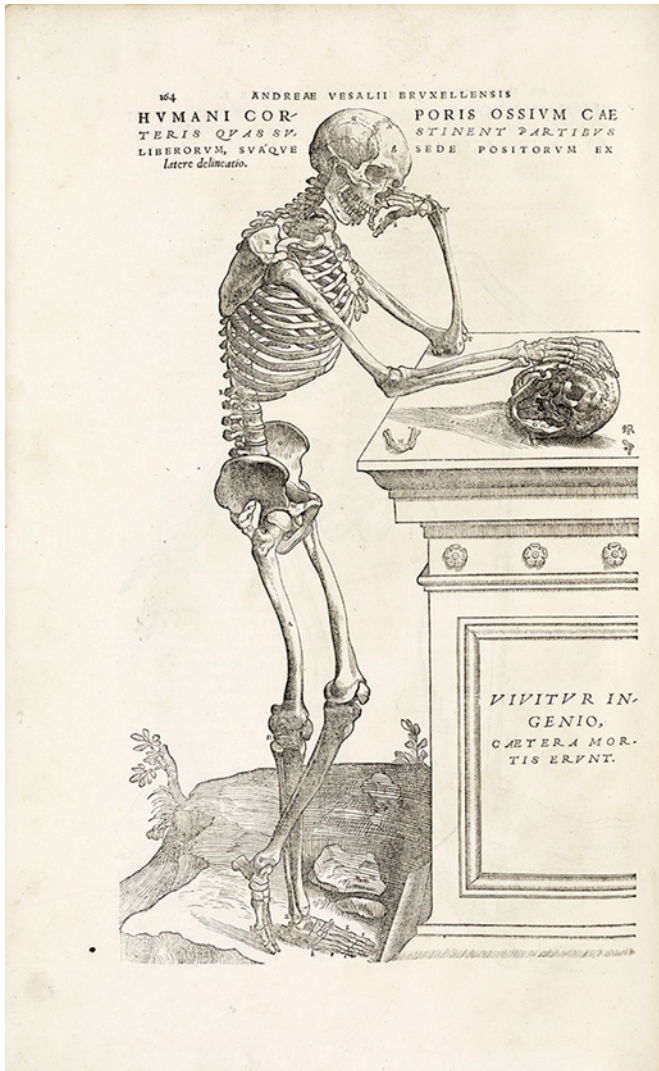


FIGURE 14 *Attributed to Jan Stephan van Calcar, Contemplative skeleton, 1543.*
 PHOTOGRAPH: WELLCOME LIBRARY, LONDON

ambitious woodcut designs of full-length anatomical figures produced for its 1543 edition have been attributed variously to Titian⁷ or Jan Stephan van Calcar (died c. 1546), an artist associated with Titian's studio, recent research

⁷ Charles M. Bernstein, "Titian and the Anatomy of Vesalius," *Bollettino dei Musei Civici veneziani*, XXII, 1977, pp. 39–50.

suggests that the latter is more likely.⁸ Recalling classical sculpture through their exaggerated poses, these skeletons and flayed bodies were artistically sophisticated as well as anatomically-accurate visual aids, making them ideal models for painters and sculptors depicting both skeletal and muscular⁹ structures. Furthermore, the skeletons depicted in Vesalius's *De humani corporis fabrica* betray more than just an awareness of the importance of osteology in the study of the human body; they also acknowledge the visual currency of the skeleton as a symbol of death by placing it within an allegorical context. This happens not only in the example of the aforementioned skeleton contemplating a skull (which rests on a plinth bearing the inscription *VIVITVR INGENIO, CAETERA MORTIS ERVNT*: 'talent lives on, all else is mortal'), but also in the frontispiece to the revised 1555 edition, in which the skeleton overlooking a dissection scene holds a scythe, alluding to Death's ultimate triumph.

The *De humani corporis fabrica* illustrations, therefore, with their implicit *memento mori* message, lent themselves particularly well to adaptation in commemorative artwork. In Poland-Lithuania, the best examples of this are two late-seventeenth century funerary monuments from Frombork, a city

8 Patricia Simons and Monique Kornell, 'Annibal Caro's After-Dinner Speech (1536) and the Question of Titian as Vesalius's Illustrator', *Renaissance Quarterly*, LXI, no. 4, 2008, pp. 1069–1097.

9 The figure flayed to reveal the muscular structure (*écorché*) can be found on two significant Polish-Lithuanian funerary monuments executed in the 1690s. The first of these, the marble funerary monument of Bishop Andrzej Trzebicki (d. 1679) by Polish sculptor Jakub Bielawski on the north choir wall of the Church of St Peter and St Paul in Kraków, incorporates two shrouded *écorché* figures which act as caryatids. The second, a funerary monument to Bogusław Leszczyński (d. 1691), Bishop of Łuck, at the Church of St Nicholas in Leszno, was attributed by Mariusz Karpowicz to an unknown North Italian stucco artist and includes an *écorché* figure at its apex. For Bishop Trzebicki's monument, see Joanna Daranowska-Łukaszewska, 'Nagrobek biskupa Andrzeja Trzebickiego w kościele śś. Piotra i Pawła w Krakowie', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, XXXIX, no. 2, 1977, pp. 177–191; Adam Bochnak and Jan Samek, eds., *Miasto Kraków: kościoły i klasztory Śródmieścia*, 2', *Katalog Zabytków Sztuki w Polsce*, IV, no. 3, 1978, p. 82; Marian Jakubiec, *Kościół śś. Piotra i Pawła w Krakowie*, Kraków 2004, p. 9. For Bishop Leszczyński's monument, see Mariusz Karpowicz, *Artisti ticinesi in Polonia nel '600*, tr. Celeste Zawadzka, Ticino 1983, p. 164; Mariusz Karpowicz, *Sztuka Warszawy czasów Jana III*, Warsaw 1987, pp. 123–124; Karpowicz, 1991, p. 322; Mateusz Drewniak, *Kościół farny pw. św. Mikołaja w Lesznie*, Leszno 1996, pp. 39–45; Teresa Ruszczyńska and Aniela Sławska, eds., 'Województwo poznańskie: powiat leszczyński', *Katalog Zabytków Sztuki w Polsce*, V, no. 12, 1975, pp. 23–24. For *écorché* anatomical models in Polish collections, see Zofia Ameisenowa, *The Problem of the écorché and the Three Anatomical Models in the Jagiellonian Library*, tr. Andrzej Potocki, Wrocław 1963.

better known as the workplace of astronomer Mikołaj Kopernik (Nicolaus Copernicus, 1473–1543).¹⁰ Still *in situ* in Frombork Cathedral, the monuments draw upon Vesalius's aforementioned image of the melancholy skeleton contemplating a skull, although it is difficult to determine which edition of *De humani corporis fabrica* may have acted as the prototype.¹¹ Placed near ground level, the monumental skeletons on the vertical stone slabs act as a mirror-image of the viewer: looking at them, we are confronted with a vision of our future selves. As such, the interaction of the viewer with these skeletons is reminiscent of the Western-European medieval tradition of the *transi* tomb, in which the deceased was depicted as a cadaver; acting as an exemplar, such memorials implore the viewer to forsake worldly preoccupations and meditate upon their inevitable death.¹²

Of the two funerary monuments at Frombork Cathedral, that in the south nave aisle, commemorating Stanisław Bużeński (d. 1692), Dean of the Cathedral Chapter,¹³ is the more artistically sophisticated and ranks among the most accurate relief sculptures of Death in Central European Baroque art (Fig. 15). As in its Vesalian prototype, the large skeleton is depicted side-on, standing in a relaxed pose with one leg crossed. Its right hand rests upon an hourglass, which replaces the skull shown in the printed image; the hourglass balances upon a tomb with a lengthy Latin inscription. Replacing the pithy *memento mori* message of the graphic prototype, this detailed text gives an insight into

- 10 For the Toruń-born Mikołaj Kopernik, see Jerzy Dobrzycki and Leszek Hajdukiewicz, 'Kopernik Mikołaj', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XIV, 1968–1969, pp. 3–16. Frombork was an important city in the Bishopric of Warmia (Ermland), part of the Polish province of Royal Prussia. See Karin Friedrich, *The Other Prussia: Royal Prussia, Poland and Liberty, 1569–1772*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 24. For the epitaphs, see Tadeusz Chrzanowski, 'Szkielet frasobliwy', in Juliusz A. Chrościcki *et al.*, *Ars auro prior. Studia Ioanni Białostocki sexagenario dicta*, Warsaw 1981, pp. 391–396; Juliusz A. Chrościcki, 'Tycjan a Polacy', *Kronika Zamkowa/The Castle Chronicle*, no. 1/37, 1999, pp. 96–102.
- 11 See Andreas Vesalius, *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem*, Basel 1543, p. 164; Andreas Vesalius, *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem*, Basel 1555, p. 204. For the contemplative skeleton woodcut in the context of European art, see Jean Clair, ed., *Melancholie: Genie und Wahnsinn in der Kunst*, exhibition catalogue, Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris 10 October 2005–2016 January 2006 and Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin 17 February–7 May 2006, Ostfildern 2005, pp. 190–192.
- 12 For *transi* tombs, see Kathleen Cohen, *Metamorphosis of a Death Symbol. The Transi Tomb in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1973; Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture: Four Lectures on Its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini*, London 1992, pp. 63–66; Binski, 1996, pp. 139–152.
- 13 See Kazimierz Piwarski, 'Bużeński Stanisław, h. Poraj', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, III, 1937, pp. 157–158.



FIGURE 15 *Anonymous artist, Funerary monument of Stanisław Bużeński, 1684, Cathedral, Frombork.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

Bużeński's career and the offices he held, and states that he commissioned his own funerary monument in 1684 while still alive.¹⁴ The skeleton's left arm rests

14 'STANISLAUS BUZENSKI DECANUS VARMIE.N.CANCUS GNES.N VENCESLAI COMITIS DE LESZNO ARCHIEPI GNESN LITERARUM SCRIPTOR ANDREAE OLSZOWSKI EPI CULMEN REGNI PROCANCELLARII. REGENS CANCELLARIAE SPES AULAE FALLACES

upon the tomb and is bent to support its skull, a pensive gesture implying contemplative meditation. A closely comparable, although less artistically accomplished, relief sculpture of the Melancholy Death with an hourglass can be found on the nearby funerary monument dedicated to Zachariasz Jan Szolc, the Chapter custodian (d. 1692), in the north nave aisle of Frombork Cathedral. Like Bużeński, Szolc had made ample provision for his own death by commissioning this monument, the Latin inscription on which acknowledges that ‘everything human is smoke, shadow, vanity, and nothing at the end’.¹⁵

The depictions of a Melancholy Death on the Bużeński and Szolc funerary monuments at Frombork also reference local artistic tradition, since they recall the widespread imagery of the contemplative Christ, which was an established motif in Polish-Lithuanian religious art (Fig. 16).¹⁶ The contemplative pose was associated with the pan-European iconography of melancholy, one of the four temperaments, which was well suited to the context of death. The universal understanding of the cheek resting upon one hand as symbol of

IN HOC TUMULO SEPELIUIT, QUEM VIVENS VALENS FIERI CURAVIT. A REPARATAE SALUTIS MDCLXXXIV Obyt Die 5ta April Ao 1692'. Translation: ‘Stanisław Bużeński, Dean of Warmia, Canon of Gniezno, Secretary to Waclaw Count of Leszno, Archbishop of Gniezno, director of the chancery to Andrzej Olszowski, Bishop of Chełmno, Vice-Chancellor of the Kingdom. He buried the deceiving hopes of the court in this tomb, which he – living and well-being – let make. After the restoration of our safety 1684. He died on the 5th of April in the year 1692'. I am grateful to Dr Berthold Kress for his assistance with the Frombork translations.

- 15 Szolc's Melancholy Death is in reverse orientation to that of Bużeński. The inscriptions on his funerary monument are as follows. Above: ‘D[eo] O[ptimo] M[aximo] In omnibus operib[us] tuis memorare novissima [tua] & in aeternum non peccabis. Eccl.vii/ Ho[mo] rum memor Zacharias Ioannes Szolc Custos Cancus Varmiens’ (‘To the best and greatest God. In all thy works remember thy last end and thou shalt never sin. Ecclesiasticus 7 [verse 40]/ Remembering the honour of Zachariasz Jan Szolc, [Chapter] custodian and Canon of Warmia’). Below: ‘Monumentum hoc, ut moneat mentem. Humana cuncta fumum, umbram, vanitatem esse, imo nihil: viuens & valens poni curauit/ Anno ab ortu Salutis MDCLXXXII Credens videre bona D[omi]ni: in terra viuendum: Obyt anno Domini MDCXCII Die [Kalendis] Marti aetatis Sua annor[um] LXII’ (‘That this monument may admonish the mind that everything human is smoke, shadow, vanity, and nothing at the end: he had this monument placed living and being well./In the year of the beginning of salvation 1682. Trusting to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living. He died in the year of Our Lord 1692 on the first of March, aged 62 years’).
- 16 Fig. 16 shows the sculpture of a contemplative Christ placed atop the lantern of the Boim funerary chapel in Lviv (1609–1615), which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. For imagery of the contemplative Christ, see Zygmunt Kruszelnicki, ‘Z dziejów postaci ‘frasnobliewej’ w sztuce’, *Teka Komisji Historii Sztuki* 11, Toruń 1961, pp. 5–117; Michał Walicki, *Złoty widnokrąg*, Warsaw 1965, pp. 185–188.



FIGURE 16 Attributed to Jan Scholz, *Contemplative Christ*, 1612–1615, *Boim Chapel, Lviv*.
PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

the melancholic is demonstrated in European printed illustrations of the seventeenth century, for example in the frontispiece to the 1638 edition of Robert Burton's *'The Anatomy of Melancholy'*, published in Oxford.¹⁷ The iconographic development of this motif was famously traced in Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl's study *'Saturn and Melancholy'*, where it was stated that the 'primary significance of this age-old gesture...is grief, but it may also mean fatigue or creative thought'.¹⁸ As such, it was associated with the

17 See Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art*, London 1964, illustration 112. See also Clair, 2005, p. 263.

18 Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, 1964, pp. 286–287. See also Peter-Klaus Schuster, *Melancolia 1: Dürers Denkbild*, 2 vols., Berlin 1991.

depiction of learned men, most notably St Jerome meditating upon a skull in his study; such imagery can be found in Polish-Lithuanian funerary art as early as the 1570s.¹⁹ The melancholic pose would help to glorify Frombork's learned deceased, therefore, through the allusion to mental agility as well as religious contemplation, creating a positive context for Death's depiction that can also be discerned in other European Baroque commemorative art commissions, as discussed elsewhere by Panofsky.²⁰

Drawing upon the artistic legacy of Vesalius's anatomical treatise, the moralising motif of the Melancholy Death was developed in later printed texts circulating in Europe. An important example is Boetius à Bolswert's engraving of a seated skeleton in the influential emblem book *Pia desideria* ('Pious Desires') by the Jesuit Herman Hugo (1588–1629), first published in Antwerp in 1624 (Fig. 17). Its most significant Polish translation, *Pobożne pragnienia* by the *marszałek nadworny* (court marshal) of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Aleksander Teodor Lacki (c. 1614–c. 1683), was first published in Kraków in 1673, incorporating the original illustrations.²¹ Boetius à Bolswert's depiction of a melancholy skeleton with a praying soul trapped within its ribcage was circulated within Poland-Lithuania,²² therefore, and subsequently copied in a mid-eighteenth century religious painting in the Chapel of Our Lady of Carmel in Frydman, north-east

19 An early example is the funerary monument of four-year-old Anna Pirnesius (d. 1576), daughter of the doctor and humanist Melchior Pirnesius, in the south aisle of the Church of St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist (now the Cathedral) in Toruń. This painted monument, which is reminiscent of Albrecht Dürer's 1521 painting of St Jerome, shows the saint in his study pointing to a skull. See Michał Woźniak, *Bazylika katedralna św. Jana Chrzciciela i św. Jana Ewangelisty w Toruniu*, Toruń 2000, p. 10. For Dürer's painting, see Fedja Anzelewsky, *Dürer: his Art and Life*, tr. Heide Grieve, London 1982, pp. 212–213. There are over 125 surviving copies of Dürer's *St Jerome* from the first half of the sixteenth century, produced by at least four commercial workshops. I am grateful to Professor Jean Michel Massing for this information, based on an unpublished study.

20 See Erwin Panofsky, 'Mors vitae testimonium. The Positive Aspect of Death in Renaissance and Baroque Iconography', Wolfgang Lotz and Lise Lotte Möller, eds. *Studien zur Toskanischen Kunst: Festschrift für Ludwig Heinrich Heydenreich*, Munich 1964, pp. 221–236.

21 See Aleksander Teodor Lacki, *Pobożne pragnienia*, Kraków 1673; Aleksander Teodor Lacki, *Pobożne pragnienia*, ed. Krzysztof Mrowcewicz, Warsaw 1997; Radosław Grześkowiak and Jakub Niedźwiedź, 'Nieznane polskie subskrypcje do emblematów Ottona van Veen i Hermana Hugona. Przyczynek do funkcjonowania zachodniej grafiki religijnej w kulturze staropolskiej', *Terminus*, XIV, no. 25, 2012, pp. 47–68.

22 Herman Hugo, *Pia desideria*, Antwerp 1624, plate 38 opposite p. 333. See also Book III emblem VIII of the Polish translation: Lacki, 1673, plate opposite p. P4 recto. See also Leo Kerssemakers, Pim van Pagée and Piet Visser, eds., *Memento mori. Dansen met de Dood. De dodendans in boek en prent*, Amsterdam 2000, p. 74.



FIGURE 17

Boetius à Bolswert, Praying soul within a skeleton in: Herman Hugo, Pia desideria, Antwerp 1624.

PHOTOGRAPH: © THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD (GENERAL REFERENCE COLLECTION, SHELFMARK 12305.AAA.37)

of Zakopane.²³ The motif of a skeleton encouraging contemplation of an hour-glass, meanwhile, was also incorporated into Polish-Lithuanian printed texts, including the title page to a commemorative publication dedicated to the prominent Catholic priest Marcjjan Tryzna (d. 1643), who had been the Vice-Chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.²⁴ Executed by the publication's author, the Jesuit-educated nobleman Melchior Stanisław Sawicki (d. 1668),²⁵ the engraving shows nobleman Marcjjan Tryzna in full length wearing a lavish fur-lined cloak known as a *delia*, standing alongside a table upon which rests a

²³ Chrzanowski, 1981, pp. 392–393.

²⁴ See Melchior Stanisław Sawicki, *Żaloba białych lily tryznianskich po śmierci Iasnie Wielmożnego Iego Mści Księdza Marcjana Tryzny*, Vilnius 1643. For this publication, see Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, vol. XXVII, Kraków 1929, p. 169. For Marcjjan Tryzna, see Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, vol. XXXI, Kraków 1936, p. 346. For the engraved title page to Sawicki's publication, see Talbierska, 2011, p. 264. For Marcjjan Tryzna's death and funeral, see Tereškinas, 2005, pp. 197 and 223–224.

²⁵ See Andrzej Rachuba, 'Sawicki Melchior (Malcher) Stanisław h. Nowina', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, xxxv, 1994, pp. 336–338.

book (presumably a Bible), inkwell, crucifix and Bishop's mitre (Fig. 18). This selection of objects alludes to the learning, piety and influential position of the deceased, who had acted as the spiritual referendary of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.²⁶ Unobserved in the background, a seated skeletal Death grasps an hourglass; as with the later Frombork funerary monuments, the Tryzna skeleton imparts a degree of humility to an otherwise laudatory image.

The motif of the Melancholy Death, which had emerged in Polish-Lithuanian commemorative art of the seventeenth century, continued to reappear in fresh adaptations there during the eighteenth century. Embroidered contemplative skeletons can be found, for example, on eighteenth-century funerary vestments, a costly form of liturgical art that will be explored in more detail in Chapter 4. Two surviving examples, at the treasury of Kielce Cathedral and the Church of St Martin in Krasieczyn, west of Przemyśl, show a skeleton seated on a coffin and holding a scythe.²⁷ Usually an attribute of a predatory or triumphant death, here the scythe is redundant, as Death itself seems to mourn the deceased. Although they appear to have been designed independently of any graphic prototypes, these embroidered figures of a Melancholy Death no doubt owe an indirect debt to the artistic innovations of Vesalius's *De humani corporis fabrica*, which, from the sixteenth century onwards, had succeeded in disseminating this intriguing *memento mori* motif across Central as well as Western Europe.

The Triumph of Death

Unlike the Melancholy Death that largely traces its origins to a single, if widely-disseminated, printed image, the more prolific motif of a victorious Death trampling upon signifiers of worldly power emerged much earlier, during the Middle Ages. As will be shown here, however, even this established macabre theme, known as the Triumph of Death and rooted in the religious iconography of the Apocalyptic Rider of the Book of Revelation (discussed in Chapter 1), benefited from wider dissemination through the trade in woodcuts and engravings, among them illustrations in anatomical treatises. This circulation of graphic prototypes was especially important for establishing Triumph of Death iconography in areas of Central Europe such as Poland-Lithuania, which lacked a pre-existing medieval tradition of such moralising imagery.

²⁶ Frick, 2013, p. 411.

²⁷ Mrozowski, 2000, p. 49.



FIGURE 18 *Melchior Stanisław Sawicki*, Commemorative illustration portraying nobleman Marczjan Tryzna, a Catholic priest in: *Melchior Stanisław Sawicki, Żałoba białych lilij tryzniańskich, Vilnius 1643.*

PHOTOGRAPH: BIBLIOTEKA NARODOWA, WARSAW

The earliest Western European painted depictions of a triumphant Death often bear little relation to those later popularised through printmaking. For example, the important fresco in the Camposanto at Pisa attributed to Bonamico di Martino da Firenze (known as Buffalmacco), dated to 1336–1341, depicts Death as a winged, long-haired woman armed with a scythe, flying towards her prey.²⁸ Reflecting the female gender of ‘death’ in Italian, the winged woman that decorates this walled cemetery lacks the familiar *memento mori* symbolism of the skeletons in later Triumph of Death imagery. Paintings of a winged Death comparable to Buffalmacco’s were still being produced in Tuscany in the late fifteenth century, although by this point the female figure had been replaced by a less gender-specific skeleton. One such image, incorporated into a lavish prayer book produced in 1492 in Florence, with illuminations attributed to the highly-regarded Attavante di Gabriello (1452 to c. 1517) and his workshop, belonged to Bona Sforza of Milan (1494–1557)²⁹ who became Queen of Poland in 1518 when she married the widowed King Zygmunt I Jagiellon. Now in the collections of the Royal Castle in Warsaw, this work intended for private devotion includes an illuminated initial depicting the Triumph of Death showing a winged skeleton armed with a scythe swooping down upon people of varying social rank, among them a bishop.³⁰ Death’s determination to end the lives of even the most authoritative members of society would be a goad to humility for this prayer book’s powerful owner.

While the migration of Queen Bona’s richly-illuminated prayer book from Italy to Poland is an isolated example, the wider standardisation of European Triumph of Death iconography owes a debt to the unwavering popularity of Petrarch’s *Trionfi* (‘Triumphs’, 1351–1374), which became a frequent subject for artistic commissions, including printed imagery.³¹ This Italian allegorical poem

28 For the Camposanto Triumph of Death, see Mario Bucci and Licia Bertolini, *Camposanto monumentale di Pisa. Affreschi e sinopie*, Pisa 1960, pp. 46–51; Luciano Bellosi, *Buffalmacco e il Trionfo della morte*, Turin 1974; Białostocki, 1999, pp. 12–13.

29 See Władysław Pociecha, ‘Bona Sforza d’Aragona’, *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 11, 1936, pp. 288–294.

30 Zamek Królewski w Warszawie, MS 1512. See Mrozowski, 2000, pp. 88–89; Urszula Borkowska, *Królewskie modlitewniki. Studium z kultury religijnej epoki Jagiellonów (xv i początek xvi wieku)*, Lublin 1999, pp. 126–159; Fajt, 2012, pp. 16, 18 and 19.

31 See Konrad Eisenbichler and Amilcare A. Iannucci, eds., *Petrarch’s ‘Triumphs’: Allegory and Spectacle*, Ottawa 1990, pp. 177–255; Joseph Burney Trapp, ‘Illustrations of Petrarch’s *Trionfi* from manuscript to print and print to manuscript’, in Martin Davies ed., *Incunabula: Studies in Fifteenth-Century Printed Books presented to Lotte Hellinga*, London 1999, pp. 507–547. For an English translation, see Francesco Petrarca, *The Triumphs of Petrarch*, tr. Ernest Hatch Wilkins, Chicago 1962.



FIGURE 19 *Anonymous artist after Georg Pencz, Triumph of Death in: Mikolaj Rej, Zwyciadio, Kraków 1568.*

PHOTOGRAPH: © THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD (GENERAL REFERENCE COLLECTION, SHELFMARK C.125.E.20)

describes six victories: those of Love, Chastity, Death, Fame, Time and Eternity (or Faith); Death is shown to triumph over earthly power and preoccupations, although Fame in turn triumphs over Death. Eternity (often represented as Christ) ultimately triumphs over all five preceding forces; the triumph of God is, therefore, absolute.³² Printed images of Petrarch's Triumphs circulated widely in Central as well as Western Europe; given the composite nature of the printing process, the text and illustrations for such publications could originate in different European states, with popular illustrations being reused for various projects. This may have been the case with a sophisticated Triumph of Death woodcut (Fig. 19) based upon an engraving of c. 1539 by German artist Georg Pencz (c. 1500–1550), one of the so-called 'Nuremberg minor masters'

32 Christ's victory over Death was described in 1. Corinthians 15. 55–57. The Resurrected Christ trampling a skull or skeleton symbolising Death was a popular subject in Polish-Lithuanian Baroque art. For examples, see Krystyna Moisan-Jabłońska, 2002, ill. 15–22; Konstanty Kalinowski, ed., *Teatr i mistyka: rzeźba barokowa pomiędzy Zachodem a Wschodem/Theater and Mysticism: Baroque Sculpture between West and East*, exhibition catalogue, Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu June–August 1993, Poznań 1993, pp. 11. 94–95.

whose work was influenced by that of Albrecht Dürer.³³ The Pencz-inspired skeletal Death wielding a scythe and riding an open chariot drawn by bulls that crushes its victims beneath it was incorporated into two works by the prolific Polish Renaissance poet Mikołaj Rej (1505–1569):³⁴ *Zwyerciadło* ('The Mirror') of 1568 and the 1574 edition of *Zwierzinniec* ('The Zodiac').³⁵ Published in the emerging print centre of Kraków, these were among the first graphic images of a skeletal Death to appear in Poland, and certainly the most sophisticated.

Indigenous publications with illustrations of lesser quality also contributed to the wider and unprecedented circulation of Triumph of Death imagery in Poland-Lithuania, among them funeral pamphlets³⁶ and popular didactic literature, for example the treatise on the Four Last Things by the Carmelite friar Jan Karten, published in Kraków in 1562. One of the first eschatological works to be printed in Polish, the crude illustrations in Karten's book include a triumphant skeletal Death holding up an hourglass to its victims, depicted beneath a traditional scene of the Last Judgement (Fig. 20).³⁷ Printed material produced abroad remained crucial in disseminating such imagery, however, and was often favoured by local artists seeking high-quality prototypes for complex commissions. An example of this is the seventeenth-century painted door to the charnel house of the former cemetery of the Church of the Virgin Mary in Kraków, which consists of a central depiction of the Triumph of Death surrounded by smaller border scenes.³⁸

33 For the Georg Pencz engraving of the Triumph of Death (which is in reverse orientation to the later woodcut), see British Museum, London, museum number 1845,0809.1271. For Pencz and the Nuremberg minor masters, see Rainer Kahsnitz and William D. Wixom *et al.*, *Gothic and Renaissance Art in Nuremberg, 1300–1550*, exhibition catalogue, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York April–June 1986 and the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg July–September 1986, New York and Munich 1986, p. 99.

34 Emanuel Rostworowski, 'Rej (Rej) Mikołaj z Nagłowic h. Oksza', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, xxxi, 1988–1989, pp. 196–203.

35 Mikołaj Rej, *Zwyerciadło*, Kraków 1568, p. 165 verso; Mikołaj Rej, *Zwierzinniec*, Kraków 1574, p. 116 recto. See also Janusz Pelc, *Słowo i obraz: na pograniczu literatury i sztuk plastycznych*, Kraków 2002, pp. 96–99.

36 See the funeral pamphlet of Elżbieta Winklerowa, in which a skeleton holding an hourglass and spear stamps on the lid of a coffin: Kasper Santhoff, *Lzy smutne, na pogrzeb sławnej pamięci paniey Elżbiety Winklerowey*, Poznań 1616, p. 7 recto. See also the skeleton holding a scythe depicted alongside a seated putto with soap bubbles in the funeral pamphlet of Jan Skarbek, Archbishop of Lviv: Andrzej Barszczewski, *Transport złotego Abdanku*, Lviv 1734. For this, see Chrościcki, 1968, pp. 392–393.

37 Karten, 1562, p. 34 recto.

38 This door is now in the collections of the Museum of the Jagiellonian University. See Marcei Nałęcz-Dobrowolski, 'Liczby życia ludzkiego', *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, nr. 20, 15 May 1926, pp. 353–354; Mrozowski, 2000, p. 107; Dziubkova, 2004, p. 450–451.



FIGURE 20 *Anonymous artist, Death and the Last Judgement in: Jan Karten, O Czterech ostatecznych rzeczach, Kraków 1562.*

PHOTOGRAPH: DZIAŁ STARYCH DUKÓW, ZAKŁAD
NARODOWY IM. OSSOLIŃSKICH, WROCŁAW

As with the Frombork funerary monuments discussed above, anatomical illustrations proved a particularly useful source for artists attempting to depict the Triumph of Death in commemorative art. The most accomplished treatment of this motif to survive from Poland, likely inspired by a woodcut in an Italian anatomical treatise, was incorporated into the intricate iconographic programme of the grate doors of the royal Vasa (in Polish, *Waza*)³⁹ dynasty's funerary chapel on the south side of Kraków's Wawel Cathedral. Founded in 1598 by King Zygmunt III (1566–1632) and built predominantly under his son, King Jan II Kazimierz (1609–1672),⁴⁰ the architectural design of the Vasa Chapel⁴¹ referenced the design of the adjacent Sigismund Chapel of the royal Jagiellonian

39 See Karpowicz, 1991, pp. 326–327. For the artistic commissions of the Vasa dynasty, see Andrzej Fischinger, ed., *Sztuka dworu Wazów w Polsce: wystawa w Zamku Królewskim na Wawelu/Court Art of Vasa Dynasty in Poland: Exhibition in the Wawel Castle in Cracow*, exhibition catalogue, Wawel Castle, Kraków May–June 1976, Kraków 1976.

40 See Władysław Czapliński, 'Jan II Kazimierz Waza', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, x, 1962–1964, pp. 410–413.

41 Also known as the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception.

dynasty (discussed in detail in Chapter 5; see Fig. 56). The Vasa Chapel's distinctive grate doors (1693), consisting of an upper and lower register, were cast in bronze by Michał Weinhold (active 1651–1697) of Gdańsk, a major centre for metalworking in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Central Europe.⁴²

The most ambitious artwork of their type to be produced in Gdańsk at this time, the Vasa Chapel doors are copiously decorated with putti and skeletons. Three winged putti dominate the upper register, which is emblazoned with the ominous phrase *memento mori*.⁴³ Complementing this statement, the putto on the left panel, at whose feet lie a crown, sceptre and orb, is shown blowing soap bubbles, alluding to Erasmus's famous statement *Homo bulla* (Adage II iii 48: 'Man is but a bubble'). Emphasising the paradoxical combination of beauty and brevity which defines human life, the soap bubble motif was popular in sixteenth and seventeenth-century graphic as well as fine art across Europe.⁴⁴ The upper register also incorporates an open book with the inscription *Statutum est hominibus semel mori* (from Hebrews 9. 27: 'it is appointed unto men once to die'), topped by a snake-ridden skull and a winged hourglass. The semi-circular space above the upper register incorporates two further winged putti who hold the coat of arms of Poland-Lithuania and the Vasa dynasty, personalising the doors for the chapel's royal patrons.

The Triumph of Death is depicted twice in the lower register of the Vasa Chapel doors, complemented by the inscription *omnia aequat* ('[death] levels all'). On the left door, a skeleton grits its teeth as it pulls apart a crown with both hands, symbolising the demise of the Vasa dynasty. At its feet lie symbols of military power: a helmet, a mace, flags, armour, a canon, spears and a shield. Among the weapons is a sword that, like the crown, is broken, indicating the end of this royal line's military leadership. Further symbols of earthly power lie strewn across the ground on the right door: a papal tiara, bishop's mitre and crozier, royal regalia (a crown,

42 The details of authorship are recorded on the doors. For metalworking in Gdańsk, see Jan Samek, *Polskie rzemiosło artystyczne: czasy nowożytne*, Warsaw 1984, p. 234.

43 The putto was an established motif in Polish funerary art. For the representation of the putto in Polish child monuments of 1500–1650, see Łabno, 2011, pp. 177–202.

44 Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Adages II i 1 to II vi 100*, tr. R.A.B. Mynors, Toronto and London 1991, pp. 156–160. For *homo bulla* imagery, see Ingvar Bergström, 'Homo bulla. La boule transparente dans la peinture hollandaise à la fin du XVI^e siècle et au XVII^e siècle', in Alain Tapié ed., *Les Vanités dans la peinture au XVII^e siècle: méditations sur la richesse, le dénuement et la rédemption*, exhibition catalogue, Ville de Caen-Musée des Beaux-Arts 27 July–15 October 1990, Caen 1990, pp. 49–54; Beata Purc-Stepniak, *Kula jako symbol 'vanitas'. Z kręgu badań nad malarstwem XVII wieku*, Gdańsk 2004. For the putto with soap bubbles within the context of the Counter-Reformation, see Mâle, 1932, p. 214; John B. Knipping, *Iconography of the Counter Reformation in the Netherlands: Heaven on earth*, vol. I, Nieuwkoop 1974, pp. 86–90.

sceptre and orb), as well as a dagger, halberd and canon. A skeletal triumphant Death stands among these attributes and raises a skull in each hand (Fig. 21), its pose reminiscent of a set of scales that bring a cruel equality into the world.

A pre-Vesalian anatomical treatise provides a close, although not exact, woodcut source for the rare iconography of the triumphant Death holding two skulls, implying that Michał Weinhold may have relied upon graphic prototypes for certain elements of his complex design for the Vasa Chapel doors. The woodcut shows a skeleton in front of an open tomb, standing with his back to the viewer and raising a skull in each hand (Fig. 22). It was published in *Carpi commentaria cum amplissimis additionibus super anatomia mundini* (Bologna 1521), a commentary on Mundinus's *Anatomia* by Jacopo Berengario da Carpi (c. 1460–c. 1530), one of the first anatomists to illustrate such texts with studies from nature. Mondino dei Luzzi (c. 1270–c. 1326), better known as Mundinus, was an anatomist from Bologna whose *Anatomia*, written in 1316 and first printed in 1474 in Padua, was among the most popular pre-Vesalian anatomical manuals.⁴⁵ Although the woodcuts in Berengario da Carpi's volume are far from artistically sophisticated, like the images in *De humani corporis fabrica* they betray an understanding of the *memento mori* symbolism of the skeleton; it was logical for such medical imagery, therefore, to be harnessed by artists in search of prototypes for depictions of Death.

Italian influences upon the Triumph of Death were transmitted to Poland-Lithuania in the seventeenth century not only in the form of printed imagery, but also through foreign artists commissioned to work in the Commonwealth. Sculptors from Rome were responsible for the largest Triumph of Death artwork to survive from the former Commonwealth: a monumental stucco sculpture at the Church of St Peter and St Paul in the Antokol suburb of Vilnius. The Church of St Peter and St Paul, erected under the patronage of powerful magnate and *hetman* (commander of the armed forces in Poland-Lithuania) Michał Kazimierz Pac (c. 1624–1682),⁴⁶ is memorable for its ornate stucco decoration executed by the Ticino-born Pietro Perti (c. 1650–1726)⁴⁷ and

45 For the woodcut of a skeleton holding two skulls, which has not previously been linked to the decoration of the Vasa Chapel, see Jacopo Berengario da Carpi, *Carpi commentaria cum amplissimis additionibus super anatomia mundini*, Bologna 1521, p. 521 verso. For Mundinus and Jacopo Berengario da Carpi, see Choulant, 1945, pp. 88–96 (Mundinus) and 136–142 (Jacopo Berengario da Carpi). See also Levi Robert Lind, *Studies in Pre-Vesalian Anatomy: Biography, Translations, Documents*, Philadelphia 1975.

46 Adam Przyboś, 'Pac Michał Kazimierz h. Gozdawa', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, xxiv, 1979, pp. 721–728.

47 Michał Rożek, 'Perti (Peretti, Perty, Pretii) Piotr', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, xxv, 1980, pp. 641–642.



FIGURE 21 *Michał Weinhold, Triumphant Death, 1673, Royal Vasa Chapel doors (detail), Wawel Cathedral, Kraków.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

In ista si-
gura uident
ossa ptis po-
sterioris hois
uidet et due
calue: in qru
dextra ut co-
ronalis omis-
sura q e i pre-
supiori: ut &
sagittalis: q e
i medio: ut et
laude comis-
sura: q e i pre-
inferiori: a late-
rib et uidet
due commissu-
re a me supra
noiate in ana-
tomia cranei
q sunt supra
omissuras sq
molas exntes
ppe aures: sy
iste sunt fere
isensibiles: a
sinistris e alia
calua: in q ui-
det madibu-
le: & pars co-
missure coro-
nalis: & due
comissure in
fra sagittale
ad unu latus
existentes: &
ut unu os de
duob ossib
paris: qd est a regioe oculi seu ab osse dictu pomu faciei tedens p latu ca-
pitis uersus aurem.



FIGURE 22 Anonymous artist, Skeleton holding two skulls in: Jacopo Berengario da Carpi, Carpi commentaria cum amplissimis additionibus super anatomia mundini, Bologna 1521.

PHOTOGRAPH: WELLCOME LIBRARY, LONDON

Giovanni Maria Galli in 1677–1685.⁴⁸ One of the largest elements of this scheme is a skeletal Death holding a scythe⁴⁹ that emerges from between two columns at the vestibule at the church's west end, confronting worshippers as they depart (Fig. 23). The Triumph of Death theme is particularly developed here: the skeleton wears a crown to indicate its power over mankind, while its shroud imitates a royal cloak. At its feet lie symbols of earthly glory: a bishop's mitre, a crown, a sword, a priest's headdress, a stringed instrument, a book and a papal tiara. The sculpture would also have been visible to those entering the adjacent circular chapel (now the Chapel of St Francis of Assisi) in the south-western corner of the church, where bodies were laid out before funerals. Similarly to the imagery on the Vasa Chapel grate doors in Kraków, the commemorative context of the Vilnius Triumph of Death gives this sculpture relevance and an impact comparable with that of the earliest Triumph of Death frescos produced in late-medieval Western Europe.

Allegories of Death: The Wheel of Death

Kraków's emergence as one of Central Europe's leading print centres resulted in increasingly sophisticated graphic images being published there during the period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In addition to the woodcuts and engravings by both foreign and indigenous artists that were incorporated into printed books, single-leaf prints featuring more complex iconography were produced to be viewed as works in their own right. Images of a devotional or moralising nature, for example, were acquired by members of the religious orders as aids to private meditation.⁵⁰

As with the book illustrations discussed above, single-leaf prints were also potential prototypes for local artists attempting to depict Death in larger artworks, of which we will discuss one unique painted example in this section: an elaborate allegory of death commissioned for the Augustinian friary in Kraków. Featuring the esoteric 'Wheel of Death' motif, this little-known work is one of the biggest

48 Karpowicz, 1983, pp. 115–127; Liliana Narkowicz, *Kościół św. Piotra i św. Pawła w Wilnie*, Vilnius, 1999, p. 22; Vytautas Ališauskas and Mindaugas Paknys, *The Chapel of St. Casimir in Vilnius Cathedral*, tr. Mantas Adomėnas, Vilnius 2004, p. 41.

49 A triumphant Death brandishing a scythe also appears in illustrated funerary literature published in late-seventeenth century Vilnius. See Tereškinas, 2005, p. 192. In larger artworks, a Polish Triumph of Death painting (c. 1690) in the parish church in Staromieście depicts a skeletal Death armed with a scythe, which 'cuts down' various people, including a pope, cardinal and king. See Mrozowski, 2000, p. 108.

50 See Grześkowiak and Niedźwiedź, 2012, pp. 47–68.



FIGURE 23 *Pietro Pertti and Giovanni Maria Galli, Triumph of Death, 1677–1685, Church of St Peter and St Paul, Antokol, Vilnius.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES



FIGURE 24 Anonymous artist, *Wheel of Death*, c. 1645–1680, *Augustinian Church of St Catherine and St Margaret, Kraków*.

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

and most complex *memento mori*-themed canvas paintings produced in seventeenth-century Central Europe (Fig. 24). Examined here in detail, it was likely based upon a contemporaneous engraving, also published in Kraków, making it a particularly useful example of how Polish-Lithuanian personifications of Death were affected by indigenous involvement in the print trade.

The Wheel of Death, in which worldly hierarchy and social structures are shown to become invalid upon death, was first seen in a chiaroscuro woodcut of 1588 (Fig. 25) by Mantua-born printmaker Andrea Andreani (1558–1629), based on a lost drawing by the Siennese draughtsman Giovanni Fortuna (1535–1611).⁵¹ The most widespread iconographic predecessor of the Wheel of

51 The inscription in the bottom left corner of the Andreani print describes how the Siennese goldsmith and draughtsman Giovanni Fortuna designed the composition and dedicated it to Peter Caballo from Pontremoli: 'Ill[ust]ri D[omino] Petro Caballo I[uris] C[onsulto] Pontrem[olensi] Relig[ioso] D[ivi] Steph[ani] ordinisq[ue] milit[aris] Ser[enissi]mi M[agni] D[ucis] Hetr[uriae] Auditori Dign[issimo] Joh[annes] Fortuna Fortunius Inven[tor] Senis. MDLXXXVIII'. For the Andreani print, see Dieter Graf and Hermann Mildenerberger, *Chiaroscuro: Italienische Farbholzschnitte der Renaissance und des Barock*, exhibition catalogue, Casa di Goethe, Rome, 25 April 2001–2023 July 2001; Kunstsammlungen zu Weimar 19 August 2001–2021 October 2001; and Haus der Kunst, Munich 17

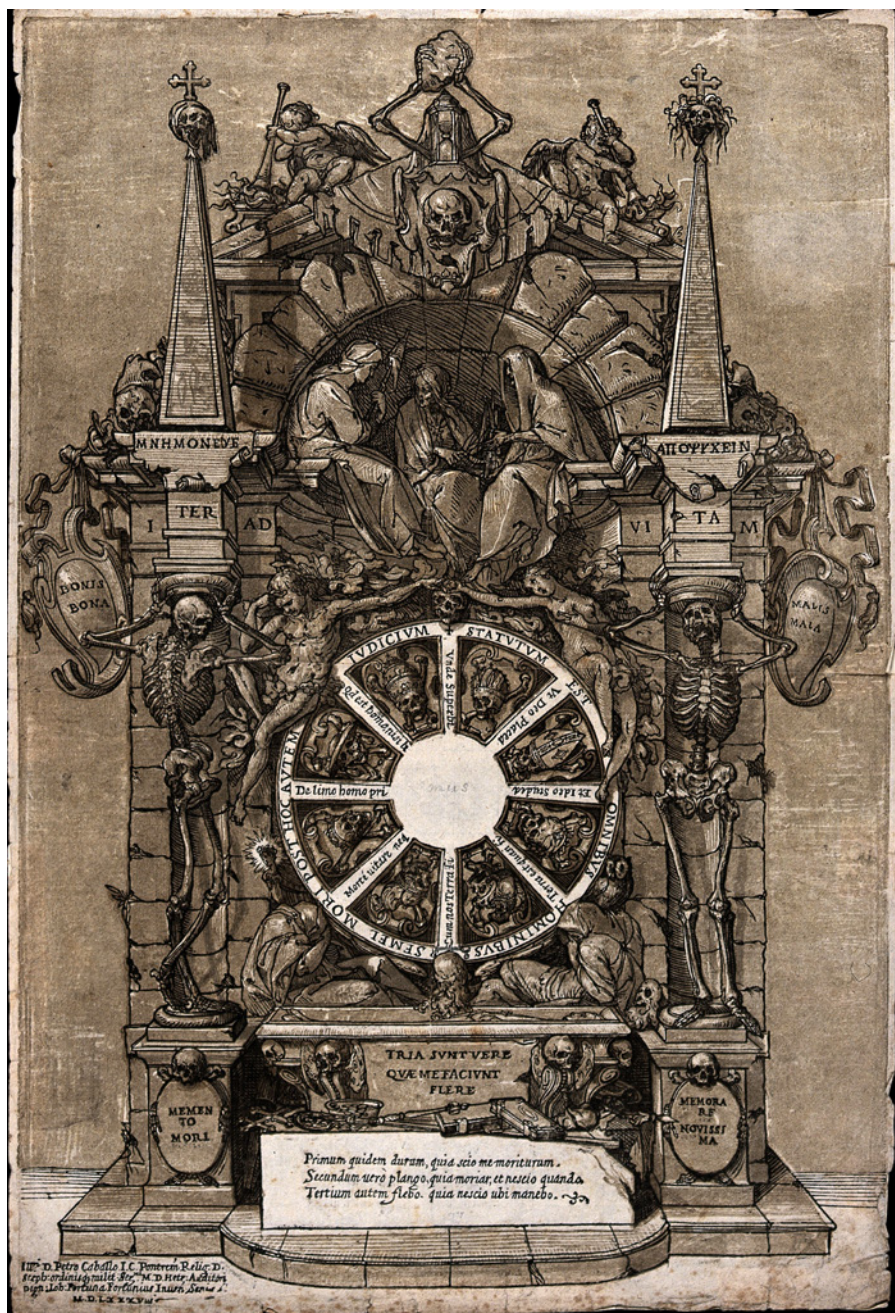


FIGURE 25 Andrea Andreani after Giovanni Fortuna, Wheel of Death, 1588.

PHOTOGRAPH: WELLCOME LIBRARY, LONDON

Death, the Wheel of Fortune, had been a staple motif since the Middle Ages,⁵² while depictions of the related Wheel of Life, in which the progression from childhood and youth to middle and old age was shown, can also be traced back to the medieval period.⁵³ Although popular in Baroque printed imagery following its introduction in the sixteenth century, the Wheel of Death was rarely adopted in major artworks, and so the Kraków painting, usually dated broadly to c. 1630–1680,⁵⁴ is perhaps the most significant European example of this motif.⁵⁵ Executed by an unknown artist for the Augustinian friary in Kraków, the painting is now displayed in the south nave aisle of the adjacent Church of St Catherine and St Margaret. The commissioning of a ‘Wheel of Death’ was particularly appropriate to the dedication of their church to St Catherine, whose attribute is the wheel upon which she was martyred, while its *memento mori* theme reflects St Augustine’s teachings: Death is the main concern of Book XIII of his *De civitate Dei* (‘City of God’, 412–427 AD), where he stated that ‘no sooner do we begin to live in this dying body, than we begin to move ceaselessly towards death’.⁵⁶ Since the Wheel of Death originally hung on the east wall of the cloisters above the door of the Chapter House, where the friars were once buried (now the Chapel of St Dorothy), it would act as a constant reminder of death to all who passed through the cloisters.⁵⁷ As with several of the earlier personifications of Death discussed in this chapter, therefore, such macabre iconography was chosen for a commemorative context.

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- October 2002–2012 January 2003, Berlin 2001, pp. 120–121. See also Giovanna Mori and Claudio Salsi, eds., *Rappresentazioni del destino: immagini della vita e della morte dal xv al xix secolo nelle stampe della Raccolta Bertarelli*, Milan 2001, pp. 72–73; Marta Leśniakowska, ‘Tarlów. *Sarmata ars moriendi*’, *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, XLVI, no. 2–3, 1984, pp. 170–172.
- 52 For medieval Wheel of Fortune iconography, see Jean Wirth, ‘L’iconographie médiévale de la roue de fortune’, in Yasmina Foehr-Janssens and Emmanuelle Métry eds., *La fortune: thèmes, représentations, discours*, Geneva 2003, pp. 105–127.
- 53 See Peter Joerissen and Cornelia Will, *Die Lebenstreppe: Bilder der menschlichen Lebensalter*, Cologne 1983, p. 104.
- 54 See Szablowski, 1934, p. 88. This dating is repeated in Mrozowski, 2000, pp. 96–97.
- 55 A notable large-scale Wheel of Death artwork in a Spanish collection is a late-sixteenth or early seventeenth-century tapestry, possibly used to decorate a catafalque. Manuel Mosquera Cobián, ed., *Speculum humanae vitae: imagen de la muerte en los inicios de la Europa moderna*, exhibition catalogue, Museo de Belas Artes da Coruña 1997, A Coruña 1997, p. 148.
- 56 See Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*, tr. Marcus Dods, vol. 1, Edinburgh 1871, p. 529.
- 57 The painting’s arched shape and the cutting back at the base to accommodate a doorway match the position it once occupied, where it covered up an early fifteenth-century wall painting of St Augustine presenting his Rule to the friars. Marcelli Nałęcz-Dobrowolski, ‘Tańce śmierci w polskiej sztuce’, *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, no. 11, 1924, pp. 169–170.

The focus of this Wheel of Death painting is a white wheel with spokes dividing it into eight equal segments between which are skulls wearing distinctive headdresses: a pope's tiara; an emperor's crown; a bishop's mitre; an Augustinian cap; a female headdress; a soldier's helmet; a king's crown and a cardinal's hat. Latin inscriptions on the wheel further imply the futility of earthly status: a reference to the Last Judgement, also seen on the previously-mentioned Vasa Chapel doors, decorates the rim: 'It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the Judgement' (Hebrews 9. 27).⁵⁸ On the spokes of the wheel are didactic phrases with biblical allusions, each of which is completed by the ending *mus*, placed at the centre of the wheel. This word-play (*mus* is the Latin for 'mouse') explains why a small mouse, a symbol of destruction and the insignificance of human life, has been depicted at the centre of the wheel.⁵⁹ The worthlessness of human life is discussed further in the Latin phrases that end in *mus*, which translate as:

Why are we proud?/ Is man not like mud?/ The first man [was made from] earth/ And as we are [also] earth/ Earth [which we are] is like dung/ We are mortal/ Thus let us strive/ To please God.⁶⁰

The repeated comparison between man and earth in the text on the wheel's spokes recalls how God formed Adam 'of the slime of the earth' (Genesis 2. 7), and relates also to God's declaration of man's mortality after the Fall: 'for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return' (Genesis 3. 19). The naked Adam and Eve, who brought death into the world, are shown reclining against the top part of the wheel. Their hands meet above the wheel, where they each hold the apple of the Fall which, appropriately, rests upon a skull. At the fifth session of the Council of Trent in 1546, the doctrine of Original Sin was strongly reaffirmed and Adam's role in bringing Death into the world was stressed;

58 'Statutum est omnibus hominibus semel mori post hoc autem iudicium'.

59 For this meaning of mouse, see Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica* 1, 50 and Horapollo, *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo*, tr. George Boas, New York 1950, p. 80.

60 'Unde superbimus/ Nonne homo limus/ Terra homo primus/ Et cum terra simus/ Terra est quasi fimus/ Morituri sumus/ Ergo studeamus/ Ut deo placeamus'. I am grateful to Dr Berthold Kress for his assistance with the Wheel of Death translations. This quotation can be compared to St Augustine's words in Book XIII of the City of God: 'For dust was the material out of which man was made: man is the parent by whom man is begotten'. Augustine, 1871, p. 523. In addition, compare the words of Paul in I Corinthians 15. 47: 'The first man was of the earth, earthly: the second man, from heaven, heavenly'.

St Augustine had done the same in the 'City of God'.⁶¹ A quotation placed above the apple on the Wheel of Death echoes this emphasis upon Adam's negative role: *regnavit mors ab adam* ('death reigned from Adam', Romans 5. 14). The biblical context for death is eschewed on the lower part of the wheel in favour of female personifications of Day and Night, the latter being accompanied by her attribute of an owl, with the winged and bearded head of Time in-between. Depicted as weeping women, the personifications are accompanied by a Latin inscription on the archway below: *tria sunt vere quae me faciunt flere* ('It is really these three things which make me weep'). This statement makes little sense to the viewer, however, as it lacks the remaining textual explanation that was included on the graphic prototype; this will be discussed in more detail below.

The Wheel of Death itself sits within an aedicule, alluding to the symbolism of the door as a passage to the next world,⁶² with pilasters bearing the Latin inscription *iter ad vitam* ('journey towards life'). The pilasters support a rusticated pediment within the tympanum of which are three female figures of the Fates who, according to Ancient Greek and Roman belief, spun the thread of life. On the left is Clotho with her distaff; on the right, Lachesis holds a triangular spindle; and, in the centre, Atropos holds the shears with which the thread of life will be cut. The power that external forces hold over human life is reinforced by an hourglass placed atop the pediment, above which is a skull held by two skeletal arms. In addition, resting upon the arched sides of the pediment are winged putti who extinguish flaming torches upon the ground, an Ancient Greek symbol of death.

Either side of the aedicule is an architrave held up by caryatid-like skeletons, the poses of which draw upon anatomical imagery from Vesalius's *De humani corporis fabrica*, discussed above. Vesalius's skeleton with a gravedigger's spade (Fig. 26) formed the basis for the caryatid on the right, while his contemplative skeleton (Fig. 14) was adapted as a model for the caryatid on the left. Above these skeletons are obelisks decorated with hieroglyphs; in Ancient Egypt, obelisks had sometimes been placed in pairs at the entrance to tombs, and in early modern Europe they were often seen in

61 Henry Joseph Schroeder, tr., *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, Rockford, Illinois, 1978, pp. 21–23; Augustine, 1871, p. 523.

62 For this symbolism, see Jan Białostocki, 'Symbolika drzwi w sepulchralnej sztuce baroku', in Jan Białostocki et al., *Sarmatia artistica. Księga pamiątkowa ku czci profesora Władysława Tomkiewicza*, Warsaw 1968, pp. 107–119; Jan Białostocki, 'The Door of Death: Survival of a Classical Motif in Sepulchral Art', *Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunstsammlungen*, XVIII, 1973, pp. 7–32.

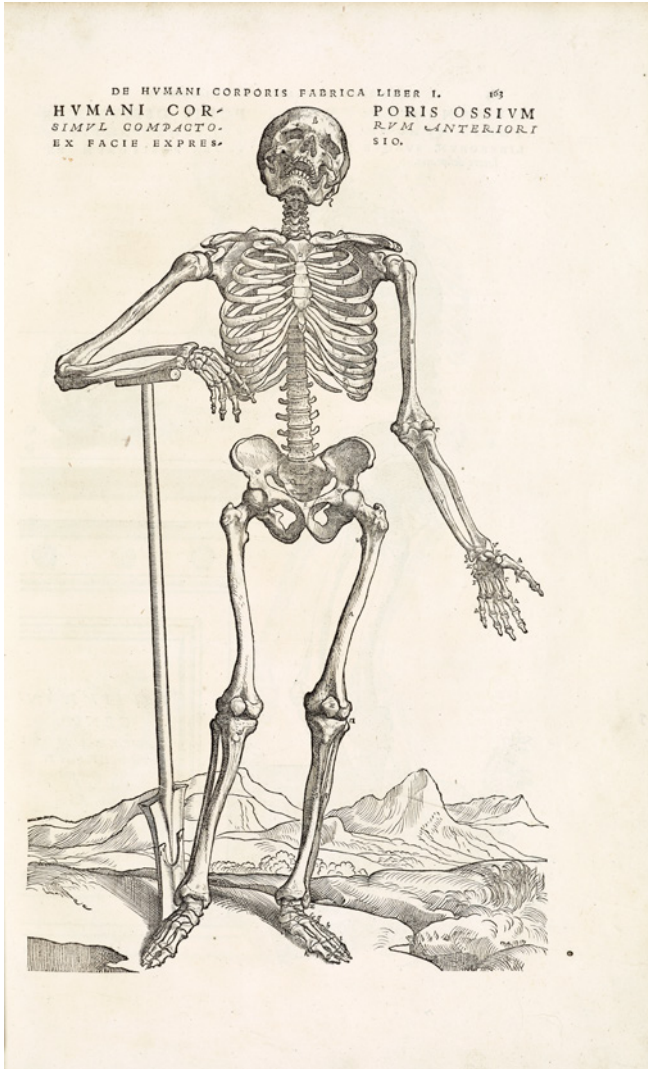


FIGURE 26 *Attributed to Jan Stephan van Calcar, Skeleton with a gravedigger's spade, 1543.*
PHOTOGRAPH: WELLCOME LIBRARY, LONDON

commemorative monuments and funerary architecture.⁶³ Below the obelisks is the ancient Greek phrase ΜΝΗΜΟΝΕΥΕ ΑΠΟΨΥΧΕΙΝ (literally meaning 'remember exhaling'); similar to the Latin phrase *memento mori*, this is an encouragement to contemplate the moment when we will breathe our last breath.

Flanking the left and right sides of the architectural backdrop are cartouches resting below skulls with the Latin phrases *bonis bona* ('good for the good') and *malis mala* ('bad for the bad'). Taken from Book XIII, section two of St Augustine's 'City of God', these refer to the particular judgement at the moment of death.⁶⁴ Those who have lived a spiritual life, therefore, can expect their souls to be saved at the moment of death, and have nothing to fear of the Last Judgement. Continuing the Augustinian theme, on the outer edges of the composition stand two skeletal figures of Augustinian friars wearing ripped black habits of their Order and holding scrolls. The Polish inscription on the right scroll translates as: 'Man, God's creation, in a body sentenced to death, Why do you care so little for salvation, in eternal heavenly glory?'⁶⁵ The skeleton on the left holds an equivalent text in Latin.⁶⁶ The message of these scrolls reflects, once again, the Augustinian belief that, while death is already present in every person, salvation can be achieved with a proper focus on spiritual matters. The symmetrically-designed Wheel of Death painting was thus a constant reminder to the friars not just of the fragility of life, but also of St Augustine's specific approach to the understanding of death.

The complex, multifaceted composition and textual elements of the Kraków Wheel of Death painting, intended for a learned audience, suggest that it was based upon a printed image. A close resemblance can indeed be found to the earliest and best-known example of the Wheel of Death motif:

63 Jerzy Miziołek, 'Obeliski Rzymu i Krakowa w 2 połowie XVI w', *Barok*, no. 1–2, 1994, pp. 153–176. Poetry printed in the shape of a pyramid was also a popular commemorative device. See Piotr Rypson, *Piramidy, stońca, labirynty. Poezja wizualna w Polsce od XVI do XVIII wieku*, Warsaw 2002.

64 'Of the first and bodily death, then, we may say that to the good it is good, and evil to the evil. But, doubtless, the second, as it happens to none of the good, so it can be good for none'. See Augustine, 1871, p. 522. In Latin: 'De prima igitur corporis morte dici potest, quod bonis bona sit, malis mala; secunda uero sine dubio sicut nullorum bonorum est, ita nulli bona'. Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate Dei contra paganos*, ed. J.E.C. Welldon, vol. II, London 1924, p. 43.

65 'Człowiecze Boże/ stworzenie/ w ciele zdany na/ skazanie/ Czemu mniej dbasz/ o zbawienie/ W chwale wieczno/ niebieskiej?'

66 Transcription: 'Homo dei cre/atura/ cur in carne/ moritura/ est tam parva/ tibi cura/ pro aeterna/ Gloria?'

the aforementioned chiaroscuro woodcut of 1588 by Andrea Andreani.⁶⁷ The composition of the Andreani print is very similar to the Kraków painting, barring certain differences.⁶⁸ For example, the Kraków artist does not include the moralising phrases *Memen/to Mori* and *Memorar/re Novissi/ma [tua]* ('remember thy last end', Ecclesiasticus 7. 40), inscribed below the skeletal caryatids in the Andreani print, nor the inscription at the base of Andreani's woodcut, which makes sense of the statement 'It is really these three things which make me weep':

Firstly it is hard [for me to] know that I will die

Secondly, however, I despair because I will die and do not know when

Thirdly, however, I weep because I do not know where I will reside [once I am dead].⁶⁹

On the woodcut this inscription is written upon a sarcophagus decorated with skulls, at the base of which lie symbols of worldly power such as books, money and a bishop's crozier. These elements are missing from the painting, as they had to make room for the door above which the image was hung. In addition, the Kraków artist adapted the Wheel of Death motif for the Augustinian context, depicting skeletal Augustinians either side of the wheel and representing one of the skulls on the wheel as that of an Augustinian friar.

A crucial final difference between the Andreani print and the Kraków painting is that each Andreani woodcut originally incorporated a *volvelle*, a moving paper circle attached to the centre of the wheel, with a representation of a crouching skeleton holding a scythe in one hand and a panel with the letters *mus* in the other. The *volvelle* could be rotated so that *mus* completed each of the phrases on the spokes; yet, since such moving elements are easily lost, it is rare to find a print with one still in place, leaving a blank space in the centre of

67 Leśniakowska, 1984, p. 170; Mrozowski, 2000, p. 96; Jerzy Szablowski, 'Ze studjów nad ikonografią śmierci w malarstwie polskiem XVII wieku', *Przegląd Powszechny*, CCI, January 1934, pp. 88–94.

68 One minor change is the difference in some of the phrases on the wheel spokes. The writing on the Andreani wheel is as follows (with translations of the phrases which differ from the Kraków painting): 'Unde superbi[mus] / Q[ui]d est homo nisi li[mus]' (What is man apart from mud?) / 'De limo homo pri[mus]' (The first man [was made] from mud) / 'Morte vitare neq[ui]mus' (We are unable to avoid death) / 'Cum nos terra fi[mus]' (Since we become earth) / 'Terra est quasi fi[mus] / Et ideo studea[mus]' (And thus let us strive) / 'Ut deo placea[mus]'.

69 'Primum quidem durum, quia scio me morituum / Secundum vero plango, quia moriar, et nescio quando / Tertium autem flebo quia nescio ubi manebo'.

most surviving impressions. A skeleton does not appear in this position on the Kraków painting, being replaced instead by just the letters 'MUS'. This adaptation at the centre of the wheel can be found in alternative graphic prototypes, however. Among the few close imitations of Andreani's print⁷⁰ is an engraving by Kraków's foremost resident printmaker at the time, Silesian-born David Tscherning (c. 1610–1691), who had trained in Strasbourg.⁷¹ This engraving (Fig. 27), produced c. 1645–1658 while Tscherning was in Kraków,⁷² closely copies the design and textual annotation of Andreani's woodcut and, crucially, has at its centre the letters MUS as they appear in the painting.⁷³ Moreover, the location and timing of Tscherning's production of his print makes this locally-produced engraving a more likely graphic model for the Kraków Wheel of Death, which allows for a narrower dating of the painting than is traditionally thought, to c. 1645–1680.

The probability that the seventeenth-century Kraków Wheel of Death, a multifaceted artwork combining Ancient and Christian *memento mori* imagery, was based upon an engraving also produced in Kraków demonstrates the self-sustaining visual culture of death in this important Central European artistic centre. Drawing upon its legacy as Poland's former capital, Kraków maintained its religious and cultural significance during the period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, whilst also developing its reputation as a

70 An engraving attributed to Dominicus Custos (d. 1612), printed with German moralising inscriptions on either side constitutes another close copy of Andreani's woodcut. See Wolfgang Harms and Michael Schilling, eds., *Deutsche illustrierte Flugblätter des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts: Die Sammlung der Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel*, vol. III, Tübingen 1989, pp. 228–229.

71 For David Tscherning, see Talbierska, 2011, pp. 169–171 and 372–374; Adam Więcek, 'Dawid i Jan Tscherningowie oraz ich ryciny o polskiej tematyce', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, XVIII, 1956, no. 3, pp. 482–502.

72 The location is recorded in the lower-left corner of the print. The influence of the Wheel of Death design may be detected in later Kraków-produced prints such as Jan Aleksander Górczyn's (c.1618– after 1695) celebratory image of Stanisław Potocki of 1667. Here, the architectural framing of the sitter's portrait is reminiscent of the Wheel of Death and incorporates caryatid-like skeletons. For both the Tscherning and Górczyn prints, see Irena Jakimowicz, *Pięć wieków grafiki polskiej*, exhibition catalogue, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie 19 June–30 August 1997, Warsaw 1997, pp. 32, 34 and 37–38. For Górczyn, see Talbierska, 2011, pp. 172–175 and 339–341.

73 Furthermore, while Andreani depicted Adam's head tilted downwards in three-quarter profile, the Tscherning and Custos prints show it in full profile and upright, as in the Kraków painting. Also, Atropos is taller than the remaining Fates in the Custos and Tscherning prints and the Kraków painting, while she sits lower than Clotho and Lachesis in the Andreani image.



FIGURE 27 David Tscherning, Wheel of Death, c. 1645–1658.

PHOTOGRAPH: MUZEUM NARODOWE W WARSZAWIE, WARSAW

pioneering regional centre for the printing industry. Complex allegories such as the Wheel of Death, featuring a multiplicity of skulls and skeletons, demonstrate the sophisticated assimilation of the personification of death into both Polish-Lithuanian print culture and larger artistic commissions undertaken in the Commonwealth, the latter of which owed a significant debt to the former.

Conclusion

Artistic personifications of Death first appeared in the territories of Poland and Lithuania *en masse* in the early modern period. Their presence spanned a range of commissions, from funerary monuments and liturgical vestments to monumental representations for religious spaces with a public funerary function, such as chapels and charnel houses. Unburdened by local medieval prototypes, which were limited, such artworks did not reflect the feminine gender of 'death' in Polish or Lithuanian, as had been the case with certain Italian or French examples of the Middle Ages, but instead followed the more recent European fashion for depicting Death as an asexual skeleton, albeit often represented in acts of stereotypically 'masculine' brutality. Making up for lost time and engaging in traditional and new modes for the personification of Death as fully as their Western European counterparts, the early modern artists of Central Europe rapidly established an unprecedented and diverse regional tradition of the macabre.

Aided by a proliferation of death-related imagery newly-available in printed form, indigenous artists based their representation of the leveller upon a range of pan-European graphic sources, among them anatomical treatises, notably Andreas Vesalius's *De humani corporis fabrica*, as well as emblem books, including Herman Hugo's *Pia desideria*, which was available in Polish translations. While the accomplished illustrations in these influential works originated further afield, Central European printed books also began to incorporate locally-produced personifications of Death at an early stage, albeit mostly crude renditions of this motif. Among these were illustrations to ephemeral literature, such as funeral pamphlets, and popular didactic publications, for example Jan Karten's treatise on the Four Last Things. From the seventeenth century onwards, more adventurous graphic images began to be published in the Commonwealth, including illustrations to anatomical treatises and single-leaf prints that constituted works of art in their own right. This abundance of *memento mori* iconography, distributed through printing centres such as Gdańsk and Kraków, contributed to a fresh interest in depicting Death, in both graphic and fine art, within the territories of Poland-Lithuania.

The distinct modes for Death's personification in painting and sculpture that emerged in the Commonwealth as a result were linked closely to pan-European traditions by virtue of their direct reliance upon foreign printed sources, or indirectly through indigenous graphic imagery that itself drew upon wider European models. Since 'melancholy was the humour characteristic of great men and heroes',⁷⁴ it is appropriate that the skeletal Melancholy Death, with its roots in anatomical illustrations, was adopted in commemorative commissions such as funerary monuments and ornate vestments to acknowledge Death's power whilst tacitly honouring the deceased, in line with what Panofsky termed the 'positive aspect of death'.⁷⁵ The widespread Triumph of Death motif, meanwhile, which had developed in Western Europe from the iconography of the Apocalyptic Rider and Petrarch's renowned Triumphs, was more uncompromising in its representation of a victorious and indiscriminating leveller. In Poland-Lithuania it was seen in graphic art as well as larger artistic commissions, including those executed by local painters, for example a pair of skeletons adorned with attributes of worldly status – one a royal crown and sceptre (Fig. 28), the other a papal tiara and cross – executed in a folk style at the wooden Church of the Virgin of the Rosary in Boronów near the pilgrimage site of Częstochowa (c. 1611).⁷⁶ Such Triumphs of Death served to emphasise Death's physical power and ubiquity as well as the futility of worldly ambitions, both secular and religious. Appropriately, given the established tradition of Triumph of Death imagery in Italy since the Middle Ages, Italian influences can be discerned in the post-medieval adoption of this motif in Poland-Lithuania, both through the circulation of Italian woodcuts and engravings and the role of itinerant Italian artists in prominent Polish-Lithuanian commissions, working in locations as distant from their homeland as Vilnius.

While Polish-Lithuanian personifications of Death often owed a debt to graphic prototypes, these were frequently adapted to meet the requirements of specific patrons. David Tscherning's accomplished seventeenth-century engraving of the Wheel of Death, for example, was modified to include depictions of Augustinian friars in the guise of skeletons when it was adopted as a model for a painting in Kraków's Augustinian friary. Meanwhile, a modest

74 DaCosta Kaufmann, 1995, p. 120.

75 Panofsky, 1964.

76 See Izabella Rejduch-Samkova and Jan Samek, eds., 'Województwo katowickie: powiat lubliniecki', *Katalog Zabytków Sztuki w Polsce*, VI, no. 8, 1960, p. 2. For the Church of the Virgin of the Rosary in Boronów, see Jan Myrcik, ed., *Zabytkowy Kościół M.B. Różańcowej w Boronowie*, Boronów 1995.



FIGURE 28 *Anonymous artist, Triumphant Death wearing a crown, c. 1611, Church of the Virgin of the Rosary, Boronów.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

woodcut of a skeleton from an Italian anatomical treatise, related to a commission for ornate grate doors at the royal Vasa Chapel at Kraków's Wawel Cathedral, was transformed to reflect the indigenous religious and royal context, incorporating relevant symbols of power such as a bishop's mitre and crozier, and royal regalia. This personalisation of personifications of Death, on

occasion merging pan-European macabre iconography with regional traditions such as that of the contemplative Christ, was a consistent feature of the visual cultures of death in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; although attuned to artistic fashions from further afield, artists sought to respond to the preoccupations of local audiences in order to maximise the moralising potential of their work.

The Dance of Death in Central Europe: Indigenous Variations on a Familiar Theme

Benefiting from our undoing, Death will rip off the golden crown of the king as it does the bishop's costly mitre; it will discard the rich man's gold *guzy* and crimson *delia* as it does the meagre attire of the beggar; it will remove the hood of the monk and the soldier's armour; it will treat the silk robes of the courtier in the same manner as the peasant's mop of hair.¹

This emotively-worded extract, taken from the funeral sermon for Konstancja Czarnkowska (born Princess Konstancja Lubomirska, d. 1646), constitutes a highly-developed encounter with Death. It emphasises the didactic *memento mori* message more vividly than the personifications discussed in the previous chapter, focusing greater attention on Death's victims, who represent the whole social spectrum. Delivered by the Reverend Dydak Stanisław Meler (d. 1651), an Observant Franciscan, the enticing narrative would have made the congregation consider each individual – the king, the bishop, the rich man, the beggar, the monk, the soldier, the courtier and the peasant – in turn, although their distinguishing features are noted only to be dismissed as inconsequential in the face of an uncompromising Death, who treats all alike irrespective of social status. The sermon invokes an established theme known as the Dance of Death, in which cadavers or skeletons dance or enter into dialogue with people of varying ecclesiastical and secular rank in order to demonstrate that no-one can escape their mortal fate. Popular in Western European literature and art since the fifteenth century, the Dance of Death, similarly to other macabre motifs, did not appear within the territories of the Commonwealth until the seventeenth century, for reasons discussed in

1 'Bo korzystna zguby naszej śmierć, tak da po złotej koronie Krolowi, iako też y po drogiey Infule Biskupowi, tak bogatemu po złotych guzach y szkarłatney deliey, iako y żebrakowi po nędzney kamizeli, tak po kapturze Mnichowi, iako y po iasnoświetney zbroi żołnierzowi, tak po świeżym bławacie uderzy Dworaka, iako też po kmiecey czuprynie Chłopka nieboraka'. See Dydak Stanisław Meler, *Pociecha Przednim wczczona mieiscem Abo Controversia Miedzy Zalem y Pocięchą Pogrzebnymi, o pierwsze w Sercu Żalonym mieisce Przy wroczystym Akcie Pogrzebv*, Poznań 1646; Marek Rostworowski, ed., *Polaków portret własny*, vol. II, Warsaw 1986, p. 63. For Dydak (or Didak) Stanisław Meler see Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, vol. XXII, Kraków 1908, pp. 274–275.

Chapter 1. The later Polish-Lithuanian variations on this theme achieved their moralising impact by contextualising the Dance of Death and making it relevant to local audiences. So Dydak Stanisław Meler, for example, chose to reference within his sermon elements of indigenous dress, such as the ornamental buttons known as *guzy*, in order to personalise it for a Polish congregation.

Meler's sermon is just one example of how the revived religious orders of Poland-Lithuania harnessed the medieval Dance of Death motif for the purposes of public proselytisation in the seventeenth century, employing it as a moralising combination of text and image and disseminating it to locations as far-removed from its Western European roots as Grodno, now Hrodna in western Belarus. The new wave of Dance of Death artwork that followed constitutes the most significant and coherent body of macabre imagery to survive from early modern Central Europe, notable for its similarities to as well as differences from its Western European antecedents. Given the repeated scholarly focus upon medieval and Renaissance examples of the Dance of Death, both in classic studies such as those of James Clark and Hellmut Rosenfeld as well as more recent ones, notably that by Elina Gertsman, the later Polish-Lithuanian interpretations of this motif have been largely overlooked, as has the crucial role of printed imagery in the transmission of this iconography belatedly to this region of Central Europe.² While the Dance of Death's enduring pan-European popularity has previously been linked to its viability for mass dissemination in printed form, in books or as single-leaf prints, it will be shown here that this correlation becomes especially apparent when considering Polish-Lithuanian Baroque visual culture.

This chapter will begin by establishing the medieval roots of the Dance of Death and the related theme of the Three Living and the Three Dead, and to what extent these permeated beyond Western Europe in the Middle Ages. It will then focus upon the religious patronage that enabled the delayed adoption of the Dance of Death in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Poland-Lithuania, considering the contribution of the religious orders, in particular the Observant Franciscans. The initial role of foreign graphic prototypes in introducing the theme to Poland-Lithuania will be assessed, as will its indigenous development and adaptation by local painters, which eventually led to the self-perpetuation of the motif and the redundancy of printed visual aids.

2 See James M. Clark, *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Glasgow 1950; Hellmut Rosenfeld, *Der mittelalterliche Totentanz. Entstehung – Entwicklung – Bedeutung*, Cologne 1974; Gertsman, 2010. See also Kinch, 2013, pp. 183–259.

Dancing with Death in Medieval Western Europe and beyond

The Dance of Death, also widely referred to using the French *danse macabre* or the German *Totentanz* (or, in Polish, *taniec śmierci*), has a strong moralising message: by depicting encounters between cadavers or skeletons and people of varying ecclesiastical and secular rank, it demonstrates that death equalises all. Despite being neither biblical³ nor classical in origin, this macabre theme has a surprisingly unbroken iconographic history, reaching from the Middle Ages to the present day. It is the earliest artistic examples of this subject, largely confined to Western Europe, which continue to receive the bulk of scholarly attention, in part because they may be considered the most innovative, and in part because they form an essential starting-point for considering the Dance of Death's later incarnations. The related theme of the Three Living and the Three Dead, the first manifestations of which precede the Dance of Death, has also received extensive study and it is to this that we turn now, before moving on to the development of the *danse macabre* itself.⁴

Medieval interest in the macabre started in earnest with French poems of the thirteenth century relaying the legend of the Three Living and the Three Dead.⁵ The story describes how three noblemen out together enjoying leisurely pursuits unexpectedly come face-to-face with three gruesome cadavers. These putrid revenants speak to the noblemen with the intention of informing them about the transience of earthly wealth and the inevitability of their own death and decay. Acting as an *exemplum* and encouraging the repentance of the reader for his own sins and vanities, the tale gained popularity and was soon depicted in works of art, including wall paintings and illuminations in lay devotional books. While most artistic examples of the Three Living and the

3 References to Death equalising all are to be found in the Bible, however, for example: 'The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master' (Job 3. 19).

4 Recent studies of the Three Living and the Three Dead in art include: Elina Gertsman, 'The Gap of Death: Passive Violence in the Encounter Between the Three Dead and the Three Living', in Allie Terry-Fritsch and Erin Felicia Labbie eds., *Beholding Violence in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Farnham 2012, pp. 85–104; Kinch, 2013, pp. 107–144; Christine Kralik, 'Death Is Not the End: The Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead in the Berlin Hours of Mary of Burgundy and Maximilian I', in Suzanne Conklin Akbari and Jill Ross eds., *The Ends of the Body: Identity and Community in Medieval Culture*, Toronto and London 2013, pp. 61–85.

5 For the legend of the Three Living and the Three Dead, see Delumeau, 1990, pp. 66–72; Karl Künstle, *Die Legende der drei Lebenden und der drei Toten und der Totentanz*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1908; Wilhelm Hermann Rotzler, *Die Begegnung der drei Lebenden und der drei Toten*, Winterthur 1961.

Three Dead survive in Western Europe, especially Italy, France and England, an often-overlooked and rare example from Poland deserves mention here. The scene is incorporated into a large wall painting of the Crucifixion and Last Judgement (1380–1390) on the north presbytery wall of the Church of St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist (now the Cathedral) in the prosperous Hanseatic city of Toruń.⁶ It shows three lavishly-dressed noblemen being approached by three cadavers, still wearing their burial shrouds, who raise their hands in frantic gestures that speak of the horrors that await the living once they depart this world (Fig. 29). The wider eschatological and biblical framework for the Three Living and the Three Dead motif is particularly clear in the Toruń example: the scene is placed below one of the branches of the Tree of Jesse on which Christ is crucified, and adjacent to a depiction of the resurrection of the dead at the Last Judgement. References to the Last



FIGURE 29 *Anonymous artist, The Three Living and the Three Dead below the Tree of Jesse, 1380–1390, Church of St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist (now the Cathedral), Toruń.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

6 See Jerzy Domasłowski *et al.*, *Gotyckie malarstwo ściennie w Polsce*, Poznań 1984, pp. 128–129; Adam S. Labuda and Krystyna Secomska, eds., *Malarstwo gotyckie w Polsce: Katalog zabytków*, vol. 11, Warsaw 2004, p. 632.

Judgement and redemption were also incorporated in some medieval renditions of the related Dance of Death macabre theme, as discussed below.

The comparable, although not directly related, theme of the Dance of Death is more all-encompassing than the legend of the Three Living and the Three Dead, since it shows the various estates and members of religious communities, not only the elite, encountering the dead during a 'dance' or procession. It is probable that this theme derived from religious plays and folk rituals, such as the beliefs that existed in medieval Lower Saxony that figures of those who would die in the year to come were seen to dance with the dead on St Thomas's Day (December 21). During the Middle Ages it was not uncommon for people to dance in churches and cemeteries following burials or during particular festivals, for example on the Day of the Innocents. Religious authorities, among them the Council of Basel of 1435 (Section XXI), spoke out against such practices,⁷ since the Church was wary of the spiritual dangers of dancing; St John Chrysostom (c. 347–407) in his Homily XLVIII on Matthew's Gospel, for example, had written that 'where there dancing is, there is the evil One'.⁸ Religious concerns about dancing existed across medieval Europe, and were still a pertinent issue in Poland-Lithuania when the Dance of Death theme was introduced there much later, in the seventeenth century. In fact, one of the earliest Polish-Lithuanian Dances of Death, at the Observant Franciscan church of St Bernardine of Siena in Kraków (discussed below), states clearly in its textual captions that 'canon law forbids that priests dance'.⁹

In medieval literature, the ubiquity of death as demonstrated by the identical fate of individuals from varying social strata was to be seen as early as the thirteenth century in the textual tradition of *Vado mori* ('I am going to die') poems, which spread quickly across Europe.¹⁰ In these monologues, popes, kings and peasants were united by their acknowledgement of their own mortality. The combination of these folk and literary currents resulted in

7 See Delumeau, 1990, pp. 72–85; Gertsman, 2010, pp. 54–55. For a discussion of negative attitudes to dance in Poland, see Janusz Tazbir, 'Tańce wszeteczne i dozwolone', in Janusz Tazbir, *Silva rerum historicarum*, Warsaw 2002, pp. 242–260.

8 These words are a commentary upon the story of Salome, who danced for Herod and received the head of John the Baptist as a reward. John Chrysostom, *The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Gospel of St Matthew*, tr. George Prevost, vol. II, Oxford and London 1844, p. 655.

9 The caption below the Friars and Death scene reads: 'Wszak Kanony Zakazuią,/ niechaj Kieźa nie tancuią' ('Although canon law forbids/ that priests dance'). For the full text, see Appendix.

10 For the *Vado mori* tradition, see Hellmut Rosenfeld, 'Vadomori', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, CXXIV, 1995, pp. 257–264.

the so-called *danse macabre* texts in which people from all walks of life enter into dialogues with the dead, who call them to join in their dance.¹¹ This literary tradition of the Dance of Death, with roots in the fourteenth century, predates the artistic renditions of this motif; it was only in the fifteenth century that the *danse macabre* matured into a powerful, didactic combination of text and image. The first painted Dance of Death cycle is thought to have appeared in 1425 in the form of an approximately twenty-metre long mural, with accompanying verses for those who were literate, at the Franciscan Cemetery of the Holy Innocents in Paris.¹² Although destroyed in 1669, this scheme is understood to have influenced one of the earliest and most widely distributed printed Dance of Death publications, Guy Marchant's *La danse macabre*, first published in Paris in 1485 and later re-published several times. This block-book consists of woodcut illustrations with textual captions, with each page dedicated to two pairs of 'dancers', which include various members of society such as a pope and emperor, a doctor who thinks he can avoid death with his potions, a humble Franciscan friar and even a defenceless baby. As art historian Sophie Oosterwijk has noted, the text of this early publication refers to the living dancing with the dead; it is only in later publications that a personification of a ubiquitous 'Death' appears as a protagonist in the dialogue.¹³

While the 'pairing-up' format that is seen in Marchant's *La danse macabre* enjoyed artistic longevity, it developed alongside another mode of representation in which a continuous linear procession of alternating living and dead figures join together in a slow, sombre parade. These 'linear' Dances of Death were most often found in murals, such as the roughly twenty-six-metre-long painting at the Benedictine abbey church of La Chaise-Dieu in the Auvergne region of France, located in the north choir aisle where funerary rites were performed. Dating to around 1470, these are also among the earliest Dance of Death images to survive, although the work's unfinished state means that it

11 See Leonard Paul Kurtz, *The Dance of Death and the Macabre Spirit in European Literature*, New York 1934.

12 See Valentin Dufour, *La danse macabre des SS. Innocents de Paris, d'après l'édition de 1484*, Paris 1874.

13 Sophie Oosterwijk, "Alas, poor Yorick". Death, the fool, the mirror and the "danse macabre", in Stefanie Knöll ed., *Narren – Masken – Karneval: Meisterwerke von Dürer bis Kubin aus der Düsseldorfer Graphiksammlung 'Mensch und Tod'*, Regensburg 2009, p. 20. See also Sophie Oosterwijk, 'Of Dead Kings, Dukes and Constables: The Historical Context of the *Danse Macabre* in late medieval Paris', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, CLXI, 2008, pp. 131–162; Gertsman, 2010, pp. 3–6.

lacks any explanatory text, which was intended to appear below the images.¹⁴ In addition to the dancing couples, at La Chaise-Dieu there is a representation of Adam and Eve with the serpent, indicating that man's mortality was brought about when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, as described in Genesis 3.19. This reference to Original Sin also appears in the extensive Dance of Death mural and accompanying inscriptions beneath the belfry tower of the Church of St Mary in Berlin, painted c. 1490, which has been interpreted as an artistic response to an outbreak of the Berlin plague of 1484.¹⁵ On the north-west corner pillar, bridging the gap between representations of the laity and clergy, is a depiction of the crucified Christ below which is written in Low German: 'See what a bitter death I suffer for you'. Meant to ease the pain of death, the inclusion of Christ's sacrifice would remind parishioners of the biblical promise of redemption: 'For by a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead' (1 Corinthians 15. 21).

While the majority of late-medieval monumental Dances of Death originated in Western Europe, with examples recorded in Switzerland, Italy and England as well as France and Germany, the motif was transmitted beyond this region in isolated cases. Well-preserved examples may be found in Estonia, Croatia and Slovakia and it is important to establish by what means *danse macabre* iconography was transmitted to these locations. Recent scholarship has focused on the significant yet previously-overlooked fifteenth-century canvas produced for the Church of St Nicholas in Reval in Livonia (now Tallinn in Estonia) painted by Lübeck-based artist Bernt Notke (c. 1440–1508), a large part of which survives.¹⁶ This Dance of Death has close links with an earlier commission of Notke's: the now-destroyed panel painting for the Church of St Mary in Lübeck which, dated to 1463, is considered to be the

14 Gertsman, 2010, pp. 127–134. See also Aimé Brunereau, *La danse macabre de la Chaise-Dieu*, Brioude 1922.

15 For the Berlin Dance of Death, see Elina Gertsman and Almut Breitenbach, 'Tanz, Schauspiel und Gericht: Performativität im Berliner Totentanz', in Uli Wunderlich ed., *L'art macabre 5: Jahrbuch der Europäischen Totentanz-Vereinigung*, Düsseldorf 2004, pp. 29–40; Elina Gertsman, 'The Berlin Dance of Death as the Last Judgment', *Source: Notes in the History of Art*, XXIV, no. 3, Spring 2005, pp. 10–20; Gertsman, 2010, pp. 134–144; Peter Walther, *Der Berliner Totentanz zu St. Marien*, Berlin 1997.

16 For the Tallinn Dance of Death, see Hartmut Freytag, ed., *Der Totentanz der Marienkirche in Lübeck und der Nikolaikirche in Reval (Tallinn)*, Cologne 1993; Elina Gertsman, 'Gegen-Seitigkeit: Rezeptionsmöglichkeiten des Revaler Totentanzes', in Uli Wunderlich ed., *L'art macabre 4: Jahrbuch der Europäischen Totentanz-Vereinigung*, Düsseldorf 2003, pp. 53–64; Elina Gertsman, 'The Dance of Death in Reval (Tallinn): The Preacher and His Audience', *Gesta*, XLII, no. 2, 2003, pp. 143–159; Gertsman, 2010, pp. 101–124.

earliest German rendition of this theme. Most likely modelled upon this earlier commission (but with some adjustments, notably in the details of the background landscapes), the Estonian example is thought to have been painted in Notke's hometown and then transported to Tallinn.¹⁷ The unusual use of canvas for a large work of this type made it particularly portable, while the established trading routes between the Hanseatic cities of Lübeck and Tallinn would have provided ample opportunities for transferring the painting to its new Baltic location.

Shipping a Dance of Death from one state to another was untypical, however. Monumental macabre artworks were normally painted by local or resident foreign artists, since murals, the usual format for such commissions, would have to be executed *in situ*. In these cases, there was another way in which iconographic models could be transmitted: the printed image. Two significant examples from the Istrian peninsula suggest that the emerging print trade resulted in the spread of macabre prototypes beyond Western Europe as early as the fifteenth century.¹⁸ The Chapel of Our Lady of the Rocks to the northeast of the village of Beram in Croatia, just west of Pazin in the centre of the peninsula, boasts a sizable Dance of Death mural on its western wall. Painted in 1474 by the local artist Vincent of Kastav, it shows skeletons blowing trumpets and holding scythes and crossbows. It has been posited that this early yet well-preserved mural was based upon printed interpretations of two related Basel Dance of Death wall paintings formerly at the Dominican friary and the Klingental Dominican nunnery (both c. 1440),¹⁹ while another *danse macabre* in the northern part of the Istrian peninsula, in the village of Hrastovlje in Slovenia, has been linked to graphic images produced in nearby northern Italy.²⁰ Commissioned in 1490 and executed by Janez of Kastav, this later mural on the south wall of the Church of the Holy Trinity in Hrastovlje shows a long procession of living and dead walking towards a skeleton on a throne by an open grave, above which Christ's Passion is depicted. Although it has recently been suggested that Janez of Kastav and Vincent of Kastav were neither personally nor professionally related,²¹ it seems likely that the proximity of these

17 Gertsman, 2010, p. 105.

18 For these, see Tomislav Vignjevic, 'The Istrian "Danse Macabre": Beram and Hrastovlje', in Sophie Oosterwijk and Stefanie Knöll eds., *Mixed Metaphors: The 'Danse Macabre' in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2011, pp. 291–310; Marijan Zadnikar, *Hrastovlje: Romanska arhitektura in gotske freske*, Ljubljana 2002.

19 Vignjevic, 2011, p. 310. See also Franz Egger, *Basler Totentanz*, Basel 2009.

20 Janez Höfler, 'O grafičnih virih za freske v Hrastovljah', *Acta Historiae Artis Slovenica*, 111, 1998, pp. 23–38; Vignjevic, 2011, p. 303.

21 Vignjevic, 2011, p. 302.

otherwise isolated Istrian examples betrays a connection between the two commissions, if only that news of the impressive Beram painting reached Hrastovlje by word-of-mouth. The existence of two such extensive Dance of Death cycles did not, however, illicit a profusion of iconographic imitations in this region of Europe, perhaps because they themselves were not reproduced in printed form for wider dissemination, as was the case with the aforementioned examples from Paris and Basel.²²

It has been shown that the Western European monopoly on late-medieval and Renaissance Dances of Death was particularly pronounced in the case of this theme's printed renditions: while some of its best-preserved large-scale European examples may be found in Croatia, Slovenia and Estonia, no early printed books of this subject appear to have been produced outside of Western Europe. The reason for this probably lies in the fact that new techniques for illustrating printed books and creating single-leaf prints developed more rapidly in key Western European printing centres such as Paris, Nuremberg and Venice than in other parts of Europe. The widespread adoption of the *danse macabre* in monumental artworks across Europe owes a significant debt to those printmakers who chose to adapt it for printing, given its convenient combination of text and image. In fact, such publications and prints have maintained a long-standing appeal, with new versions and editions emerging into the sixteenth century and beyond.

Performing the Dance of Death in Medieval Poland: Master Polikarpus's Dialogue with Death

Before considering the impact of some of these later graphic models upon the appropriation of the Dance of Death in Central Europe, we should turn to the Kingdom of Poland in the Middle Ages in order to explore its pre-*Totentanz* macabre literary heritage and how this paved the way for subsequent renditions of this theme. Surviving Polish medieval depictions of confrontations with the dead are limited to the aforementioned Three Living and the Three

22 Although not a Dance of Death as such, a seventeenth-century wall painting in the Church of St Jodocus in Trebenče, Slovenia, is a later example of a related theme. It depicts a skeletal Death bearing a scythe approaching a woman admiring a flower. See Maja Lozar Štamcar and Maja Žvanut, *Theatrum vitae et mortis humanae. Prizorišče človeškega življenja in smrti. Podobe iz 17. stoletja na Slovenskem/ The Theatre of Human Life and Death: Images from the Seventeenth Century in Slovenia*, exhibition catalogue, Narodni muzej Slovenije, Ljubljana January–September 2002, Ljubljana 2002, p. 15.

Dead mural at the cathedral in Toruń (1380–1390), the iconography of which may have been informed by contacts made through the city's Hanseatic links, as was the case with the later Tallinn Dance of Death. While the *danse macabre* does not feature in Polish monumental or printed artwork of the later Middle Ages, it is clear that the theme was known amongst learned and religious communities. Examples include a homily of c. 1420 entitled *Mortui sumus cum Christo*, delivered in Kraków by theologian Franciszek Krzysowicz of Brzeg (c. 1370–1432),²³ a Silesian who had studied and taught in Prague before joining the Kraków Academy (now the Jagiellonian University). Intended to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Queen Jadwiga (1374–1399),²⁴ whose bequest to the Academy had enabled its survival and expansion, *Mortui sumus cum Christo* drew upon the *danse macabre* tradition in describing Death attacking people from all walks of life.²⁵ Having been based in Prague prior to his arrival in Kraków, it is likely that Franciszek of Brzeg's knowledge of this macabre theme reflected the international scope of his learning.

Foreign influences can also be detected in Polish *memento mori* literature of the later Middle Ages. The most significant example is a versified script probably intended for performance within church grounds entitled *Dialog Mistrza Polikarpa ze Śmiercią* ('Master Polikarpus's Dialogue with Death'), which is thought to draw upon the mid-fourteenth century south-German text *Dialogus magistri Polycarpi cum morte*.²⁶ The Dialogue with Death had been preserved in only one original manuscript thought to have been transcribed in 1463 by Dawid of Mirzyniec, a priest from Płock, north-west of Warsaw.²⁷ The survival

23 See Henryk Barycz, 'Franciszek z Brzegu', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, VII, 1948–1958, pp. 75–76.

24 See Anna Strzelecka, 'Jadwiga Andegaweńska, Anjou', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, X, 1962–1964, pp. 291–297.

25 See Jerzy Wolny and Roman Maria Zawadzki, *Królowa Jadwiga w tradycji kaznodziejskiej XV wieku*, Kraków 1975, pp. 70–72. See also Paul W. Knoll, 'Jadwiga and Education', *The Polish Review*, XLIV, no. 4, 1999, p. 425 (here Franciszek Krzysowicz of Brzeg is referred to as Francis Krzyżowicz of Brzeg).

26 For the text of 'Master Polikarpus's Dialogue with Death', see Maciej Włodarski, ed., *Polska poezja świecka XV wieku*, Wrocław 1997, pp. 33–67. For a commentary, see Teresa Michałowska, *Wielka historia literatury polskiej. Średniowiecze*, Warsaw 2002, pp. 516–527; Maciej Włodarski, 'Rozmowa Mistrza Polikarpa ze Śmiercią', in Andrzej Borowski and Janusz Gruchały eds., *Lektury polonistyczne. Średniowiecze-Renesans-Barok*, vol. II, Kraków 1997, pp. 53–74.

27 Seminary Library at Płock, manuscript no. 91 (itself an incomplete transcription lacking a conclusion). This manuscript was lost during the Second World War, although its contents are known. The codex also contained a related text entitled *Skarga umierającego* ('Lament of a Dying Man').

of a text with such a theatrical focus, giving descriptions of the protagonists' actions as well as their utterances, suggests that Polish lay audiences of the Middle Ages were exposed to encounters between the living and the dead through dramatic productions, if not through monumental artworks. This ties into the emphasis in recent scholarly studies, especially in the work of Elina Gertsman, upon the 'performative nature' of the Dance of Death.²⁸

The Polish Dialogue consists of three parts. It begins with an introduction written in the first person, invoking God's help and addressing the audience. The message of the piece is immediately apparent: 'Listen carefully, everyone/ Familiarise yourselves with the cruelty of Death!'²⁹ Furthermore, the ubiquitous nature of Death, striking old and young alike, is stressed. Next, the scene is set; it is then that Polikarpus, *Mędrzec wielki* (a 'great sage'), is described to the audience as a man who goes to church to pray for the opportunity to see Death. His wish is granted, and Polikarpus sees a thin, pale, decaying female corpse standing before him ('death' is a feminine noun in Polish, as discussed in the previous chapter). She holds a scythe and looks truly horrific: 'The tip of her nose had dropped off/ And from her eyes fell blood-red droplets'.³⁰ A strictly one-sided dialogue then ensues between the terrified Polikarpus and the talkative Death. Death is adamant that she treats everyone alike, from priests and merchants to plump young girls and doctors. This description of the estates is reminiscent of the Dance of Death, as is the moralising message that, bearing the Last Judgement in mind, people should be wary of forsaking their souls for the enjoyment of transient worldly pleasures, which 'pass by like clouds'.³¹

Although this Polish medieval Dialogue with Death is not thought to have exerted a direct influence upon the visual arts, a painted depiction of Death produced very close to Płock, where the only surviving Polikarpus manuscript was written, deserves mention. One of the earliest, and most genuinely 'macabre' personifications of Death created in Poland, the early-sixteenth-century painting was created for the parish church in the village of Daniszewo, just east of Płock, where it formed the reverse of the church's main altarpiece.³²

28 Gertsman, 2010, p. 15.

29 'Wszytscy ludzie, posłuchajcie,/Okrutność śmirci poznajcie!'

30 'Upadł ci jej koniec nosa,/Z oczu płynie krwawa rosa'.

31 'Przeminęło jak obłoki'.

32 At the time of going to press, the altarpiece was registered as stolen from the parish church in Daniszewo. For the Daniszewo depiction of Death, see Izabella Galicka and Hanna Sygietyńska, eds., 'Województwo warszawskie: okolice płocka', *Katalog zabytków sztuki*, x, no. 15, 1992, pp. 22–23.

The crude yet highly expressive representation shows a predatory Death in the form of a decaying corpse ridden with snakes, its muted tones providing a stark contrast with the more sophisticated and richly gilded depiction of the Virgin and Child on the front of the altarpiece. As in the Polikarpus Dialogue, Death lacks any lips, making her menacing teeth protrude, and firmly grasps a scythe. Alongside is a didactic Latin quotation from Ecclesiastes 12.1:

Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come, and the years draw nigh of which thou shalt say: They please me not.³³

The isolated Daniszewo personification of Death was not part of a wider artistic trend in late-medieval or sixteenth-century Poland; it was only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that the Dance of Death, already known in Central Europe through literary works, suddenly became a popular subject for didactic artwork in Poland-Lithuania. The appropriation of this moralising theme was closely linked to the activities of the religious orders, who adapted foreign printed prototypes, developing indigenous interpretations of macabre subjects.

Death and the Friars: The Role of the Observant Franciscans

The mendicant orders of Poland-Lithuania were particularly active artistic patrons of the *taniec śmierci*, which they considered an effective goad to leading a spiritual, rather than a worldly, life. It was the Observant Franciscans for whom the majority of such artworks were executed, and due to whom this subject gained new audiences and was standardised to reflect local contexts and concerns. Given that Kraków played a pivotal role in the Central European print trade, as well as being one of its foremost centres for the religious orders, it is understandable that this city rather than any other in Poland-Lithuania should instigate a local interest in the Dance of Death, feeding as this theme did off the printed images which circulated in early modern Europe.

The Observant Franciscan friars considered the *taniec śmierci* an effective motif for the furtherance of their proselytising objectives and the communication of their teachings. Specifically, they admitted people from all backgrounds into their Order and provided religious guidance to the entire social

33 'Memento creatoris tui in diebus iuventutis tuae antequam veniat tempus afflictionis et appropinquent anni de quibus dicas non mihi placent'.

spectrum,³⁴ making the Dance of Death, with its representation of the various estates, particularly appropriate. The *memento mori* message, furthermore, was an important element of both the spiritual life of the Observant Franciscan friars and the religious guidance they provided. The Franciscan Order widely used the reminder of death as an encouragement to lead a humble, godly existence in the hope of achieving salvation rather than focusing upon transitory worldly preoccupations. In a published collection of sermons on the Last Things delivered in Kraków in 1732, for example, Franciscan friar Fortunat Łosiewski (d. 1751)³⁵ recorded a macabre tradition at the Order's Kraków church whereby one of the friars would stand at the church door holding a skull, instructing those who entered to remember death.³⁶ As was the case with *memento mori* artwork positioned at church doorways, for example the monumental Triumph of Death stucco at the Church of St Peter and St Paul in Vilnius or the Beram Dance of Death mural in Croatia, those entering the Franciscan church in Kraków could not avoid contemplating their ultimate fate. The lone Franciscan at the church door was akin to an actor in a one-man-show, single-handedly creating unlimited, individual encounters between the living and the most potent synecdochical symbol of mortality: the skull. The visual and performing arts were interchangeable instructive devices, therefore, in the prime location of the church door where the laity could be confronted most effectively with reminders of death and damnation.

The Polish-Lithuanian Observant Franciscans continued a well-established Franciscan engagement with the *danse macabre*, following in the footsteps of the earliest monumental depiction of this theme at the Franciscan Cemetery of the Holy Innocents in Paris. This preoccupation with death reflects the writings of the founder of the Order, St Francis of Assisi, who had used macabre imagery as part of his teachings. Like the mortification to which St Francis subjected his own body, this was a means of encouraging the contemplation of the worthlessness of flesh and its inherent sinfulness, which was most potently demonstrated by the rotting of the corpse. The religious message of

34 Tadeusz Kulik, 'Podłoże ideowe bernardyńskiego obrazu *Taniec śmierci* w Krakowie', *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, XXVIII, no. 4, 1980, p. 56. Records from Observant Franciscan obituaries in Poland c. 1531 indicate that 9% of friars were of *szlachta* descent, 65% were townsmen and 26% were from villages and so likely to be from poorer backgrounds. For these and related statistics, see Maciszewska, 2001, pp. 119–146.

35 See Janina Bieniarzówna, 'Łosiewski Fortunat', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XVIII, 1973, p. 422. For Fortunat Łosiewski's publications, see Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, vol. XXI, Kraków 1906, pp. 414–416.

36 Fortunat Łosiewski, *Memoryał kaznodziejski rzeczy ostatecznych*, Kraków 1736, p. 21.

this morbid emphasis was that earthly preoccupations should be overlooked in favour of spiritual priorities and an awareness of impending death.³⁷ Furthermore, Franciscans proclaimed that no man can flee Death;³⁸ as early as the fourteenth century, St Francis was depicted in a fresco in the style of Giotto at the Basilica of St Francis in Assisi standing alongside a crowned skeleton and a coffin.³⁹ The Counter-Reformation served to fuel the Franciscan Order's *memento mori* zeal, with prominent Catholic theologians such as Ignatius of Loyola explicitly encouraging meditation upon death. Depictions of Franciscans contemplating a skull became especially popular in seventeenth-century Spain, but were also commissioned in post Counter-Reformation Poland-Lithuania.⁴⁰

The appropriation of the Dance of Death theme, not seen in the art of Poland-Lithuania prior to the seventeenth century, would not have been possible without the circulation of foreign graphic prototypes that were adapted to meet the new demand for such imagery. Five iconographically-related *taniec śmierci* paintings, dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were created in Poland-Lithuania; they are found today in religious institutions in Kraków (Fig. 30) and nearby Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Hrodna in Belarus, Święta Anna and Węgrów (Fig. 31). The first three paintings were created for the Observant Franciscans, who developed a design that appears in several

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- 37 'No matter where or how a man dies, if he is in the state of mortal sin and does not repent, when he could have done so and did not, the devil tears his soul from his body with [...] anguish and distress [...] and the worms feast on his body. So he loses both body and soul in this short life and goes to hell, where he will be tormented without end'. For this extract from St Francis' 'Letter to all the faithful' and a description of how St Francis mortified his body, see Marion Habig, ed., *St Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies*, Chicago 1973, pp. 98 and 904.
- 38 According to the 'Legend of Perugia', compiled in 1311, the following canticle was sung to St Francis on his death-bed: 'All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Death, / From whose embrace no mortal can escape. / Woe to those who die in mortal sin! / Happy those She finds doing your will! / The second death can do no harm to them'. See, Habig, 1973, pp. 1076–1077.
- 39 For this fresco on the west wall of the north transept of the lower church of the Basilica of St Francis see Kinch, 2013, pp. 114 and 118; Elvio Lunghi, *The Basilica of St Francis at Assisi. The frescoes by Giotto, his precursors and followers*, London 1996, pp. 110–113.
- 40 For 'St Francis meditating upon a skull' by Francisco de Zurbarán, c. 1630, and related works, see Mosquera Cobián, 1997, pp. 157–160. Betraying similar preoccupations, in the seventeenth century the Kraków Capuchins commissioned a painting entitled 'The Fainting of St Francis of Assisi'; see Janusz Tadeusz Nowak and Witold Turdza, *Skarby krakowskich klasztorów*, Kraków 2000, p. 30.



FIGURE 30 *Attributed to Franciszek Lekszycki or his circle, Dance of Death, last 1/3 of 17th century, Church of St Bernardine of Siena, Kraków.*
 PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

early modern German single-leaf engravings.⁴¹ What is of particular interest for this study is how the German prototypes were adapted to reflect the Polish-Lithuanian context, both in terms of the figures of the living who encounter

41 The fullest study of these paintings and related prints is Aleksandra Koutny, 'Dancing with Death in Poland', *Print Quarterly*, March 2005, XXII, no. 1, pp. 14–31.



FIGURE 31 Anonymous artist, Dance of Death, 18th century, Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, Węgrów.

PHOTOGRAPH: J. LANGDA (INSTYTUT SZTUKI POLSKIEJ AKADEMII NAUK, WARSAW)

Death and the vernacular textual captions that were composed for the paintings. As such, it is especially useful to examine the earliest of this group of Polish-Lithuanian Dances of Death, created for the Church of St Bernardine of Siena at Poland's oldest Observant Franciscan friary, founded in Kraków in 1453.

Dating from the latter part of the seventeenth century, the first and most artistically-accomplished of this group of *taniec śmierci* paintings now hangs in the eastern chapel of the north nave aisle in the Church of St Bernardine in Kraków (Fig. 30). The circumstances for the commissioning of such an unprecedented artwork in Poland-Lithuania have been cited variously as the aftermath of the plague outbreak in Kraków of 1651, during which the Observant Franciscans had cared for plague victims,⁴² as well as the Swedish invasion of 1655–1660, which resulted in significant damage to their Kraków friary.⁴³ It was necessary to rebuild the friary church, which was consecrated in 1680, and it is likely that the instructive Dance of Death canvas was one of the many images executed for display in this new building. With no archival evidence relating to the commission, the painting has often been linked to the friary's prolific and likely self-trained resident artist, Franciszek Lekszycki (c. 1600–1668).⁴⁴

42 See Marcei Nałęcz-Dobrowolski, 'Tańce śmierci w polskiej sztuce', *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, no. 8, 1924, p. 117.

43 In the absence of archival evidence, the dating of the Kraków Dance of Death has been problematic. Initially dated to the eighteenth century by Józef Muczkowski, it has since been dated to the seventeenth century by Władysław Tomkiewicz and Tadeusz Kulik, with the former considering it to be a response to the Swedish invasion. See Józef Muczkowski, 'Taniec śmierci w kościele OO. Bernardynów w Krakowie', *Rocznik Krakowski*, xxii, 1929, p. 133; Władysław Tomkiewicz, *Pędzlem rozmaitym. Malarstwo okresu Wazów w Polsce*, Warsaw 1970, p. 97; Tadeusz Kulik, 'Podłoże ideowe bernardyńskiego obrazu *Taniec śmierci* w Krakowie', *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, xxviii, no. 4, 1980, p. 43. Marcei Nałęcz-Dobrowolski described the costumes depicted in the Kraków Dance of Death as consistent with the mid-seventeenth century: Nałęcz-Dobrowolski, no. 8, 1924, p. 117. For a history of the friary at this time see Kamil Kantak, Jerzy Szablowski and Jerzy Żarnecki, *Kościół i klasztor OO. Bernardynów w Krakowie*, Kraków 1938, pp. 62–79; Mieczysław Skrudlik, *Życie i dzieła malarza bernadyńskiego O. Franciszka Lekszyckiego*, Sandomierz 1916, pp. 17–18.

44 See Nałęcz-Dobrowolski, no. 11, 1924, pp. 168–169. A painting of the Crucifixion executed for the Kraków Observant Franciscans and also associated with Lekszycki bears strong similarities to the central scene of the Kraków Dance of Death. See Kantak, Szablowski and Żarnecki, 1938, p. 129. For Lekszycki, see also Janina Dzik, *Franciszek Lekszycki: malarz religijny baroku*, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska 1998; Jolanta Maurin-Białostocka et al., *Słownik artystów polskich i obcych w Polsce działających: malarze, rzeźbiarze, graficy*, vol. V, Warsaw 1993, pp. 22–24; Jan Samek, 'Lekszycki (Lexycki, Leksycki) Franciszek', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, xvii, 1972, pp. 15–16; Skrudlik, 1916.

Although an accomplished painter, Lekszycki is known to have based his compositions upon graphic prototypes, as was done in the case of the Kraków Dance of Death, which has all the characteristics of a print-based artwork: the densely-packed oil painting comprises a complex central image and a border made up of smaller peripheral scenes, each accompanied by a textual explanation in Polish to demonstrate its didactic aims. Any overall sense of illusionism is subservient to the two-dimensionality of text (for a transcription and translation of the full text, see Appendix) and the profusion of small figures, each presented within their own individual landscape.

The centre of the Kraków *taniec śmierci* is dominated by a dancing circle of women and skeletons accompanied by two tired musicians, recalling medieval literary and performative traditions of circular dances in churchyards.⁴⁵ The artist was best able to showcase his skills in this part of the painting, rendering the delicacy of the colourful fabrics worn by the nine women, whose costumes denote their status; this hierarchy diminishes clockwise from the top, from an empress with her crown to a woman with a jester's hat, and therefore a fool.⁴⁶ The vanity of these worldly attributes is mocked by the skeletons, whose skulls are decorated with flimsy ribbons. It is these skeletons, not the women, who show signs of movement, jiggling their bony legs and peering hungrily at their prey. The women's ignorance of their fate is emphasised in the cartouche inscription above: 'We dance our way through life/ Not knowing that death is alongside'.⁴⁷ The four corners of the central scene incorporate biblical scenes that had featured in some Dances of Death since the medieval period. Flanking the musicians at the base of the dancing circle are depictions of Adam and Eve taking an apple from the Tree of Knowledge, and the maw of hell; the inscription in-between states that those who leave the dance to reside in heavenly bliss are the lucky ones, whilst others who fall into hell cry out in pain.⁴⁸ In the top-right of the central scene, an image of heaven is incorporated, whilst the top-left corner shows the crucified Christ flanked by Mary and John the Evangelist. By virtue of Christ's sacrificial death, mankind was redeemed and eternal life made possible: 'And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive' (1 Corinthians 15. 22). As such, the central part of the canvas succinctly incorporates messages about death, punishment and redemption alongside the *taniec śmierci*.

45 See Gertsman, 2010, pp. 54–55.

46 Among the nine women, Nałęcz-Dobrowolski identified an empress, queen, princess, countess, peasant-woman, townswoman and girl. Marceli Nałęcz-Dobrowolski, 'Tańce śmierci w polskiej sztuce', *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, no. 7, 1924, p. 102.

47 'Zyjąc wszystko tancuiemy/ Aże obok Smierci nie wiemy'.

48 'Szczęśliwy kto z tego Tańcu/ Odpocznie w Niebieskim Szańcu/ Nieszczęsny kto z tego Koła/ W piekło wpadszy biada woła'.

The Polish-Lithuanian context for this Dance of Death is only made explicit in the border imagery surrounding the central scene, where fourteen individual encounters between men of varying social rank and a skeletal Death are depicted. These roundels should be read in a clockwise direction from the pope in the top left corner to see the systematic diminishing of social position: an emperor, a king, a cardinal, a bishop, a prince, a Polish-Lithuanian senator, a Polish-Lithuanian nobleman, a merchant, a peasant, a soldier with a beggar, and finally a fool with a child. On either side of the central image there are also two rectangular scenes representing religious communities, also reflecting the painting's patronage. Between the bishop and the prince, members of the religious orders encounter Death; among these are Observant Franciscans, Jesuits, Paulines and Dominicans. Opposite the religious orders, a group of non-Christians consisting of Turks and Jews is placed between the roundel with a soldier and another with a child. Each scene is set against an appropriate landscape, in the backgrounds of which can be found buildings alluding to the social position of the individual men; for instance, the bishop is accompanied by a depiction of a church. The Devil appears in the background of several of the scenes, taking his chance at claiming the souls of the dead,⁴⁹ whilst any overt symbols of earthly status, such as the pope's tiara or the king's crown, are thrown to the ground by the skeletons, who sometimes trample them in a manner reminiscent of Triumph of Death imagery.

In contrast to their female counterparts, the men are aware of the presence of Death, and they enter into conversation with the skeletons. These vernacular dialogues, written as four-line rhyming couplets below each scene, record the reactions of the individuals to Death's invitation to 'dance'. The cardinal, for example, proclaims: 'I must drop my cardinal's hat/ Even though I do not wish to do so, / It is a terrifying moment when the music/ Cries out that one must die'.⁵⁰ In some cases we hear what Death has to say, as in the case of the peasant who will soon be released from the hard struggle of his life: referring to him as a 'hard-working peasant', Death states that it will dance with the man who oars the earth in the same way as with a wealthy man.⁵¹ Among these so-called wealthy men

49 For the Devil's attempts to steal the soul, see Jean Michel Massing, 'Sicut erat in diebus Antoni'; The Devils under the Bridge in the *Tribulations of St Antony* by Hieronymous Bosch in Lisbon', in Jean Michel Massing, *Studies in Imagery: Texts and Images*, vol. 1, London 2004, pp. 421–446.

50 'Kardynalskie Kapelusze/ Chocbym niechciał rzucić muszę/ Straszysz to skok gdzie muzyka/ Ze umrzeć trzeba wykrzyka'.

51 'Y Ty Kmiotku Spracowany/ W Smiertelnes się wybrał tany/ Niepyszna Dama z Oraczem/ Tak Tańczy iako z Bogaczem'. This scene is reminiscent of Aesop's fable of 'The Old Man and Death'. See Joseph Jacobs, *The Fables of Aesop: Selected, Told Anew and their History Traced*, London 1979, pp. 164–165.

are the distinctly Polish-Lithuanian figures of the senator and nobleman, identifiable by their orientalisising dress: the senator, for example, wears a characteristic long yellow tunic called a *żupan*, covered with a red *delia*.⁵² The political prowess of these men is made clear in the textual inscriptions: the senator must 'get up from his seat against [his] will' (referring to his involvement in the senate, which had developed out of the royal council), whilst the nobleman struggles in vain to make Death respect his dynastic authority, asking: 'How have your dry bones / Encroached upon my privileges', alluding to the numerous privileges that the *szlachta* had grown accustomed to. Although Death will triumph over both of these individuals, their inclusion in the painting indicates the specific political context and social hierarchies of Poland-Lithuania, which constitutes a clear departure from established Western European *danse macabre* iconography.

Whilst the Kraków painting adapts the Dance of Death for a local audience, in particular through its use of vernacular text, it closely copies a visual precedent set by German printmakers. Five German prints share the same composition as the Kraków Dance of Death: an accomplished engraving published between 1635 and 1666 in Nuremberg by Paulus Fürst (1608–1666);⁵³ an engraving attributed to the so-called Master 'J.W', which should be dated broadly to the second half of the seventeenth century (Fig. 32);⁵⁴ a seventeenth-century anonymous engraving closely linked to that by the Master J.W.;⁵⁵ an engraving published by the children of Johann Peter Wolff in Nuremberg in the first half of the eighteenth century⁵⁶; and an engraving by Johann Elias Ridinger (1698–1767)

52 For Polish-Lithuanian dress, see Irena Turnau, *History of Dress in Central and Eastern Europe from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, tr. Izabela Szymańska, Warsaw 1991, pp. 71–85; Małgorzata Moźdzynska-Nawotka, *O modach i strojach*, Wrocław 2002; Anna Sieradzka, *Tysiąc lat ubiorów w Polsce*, Warsaw 2003.

53 Signed *Paulus Fürst Excudit*, this engraving has Latin and German captions. See Wolfgang Harms and Michael Schilling, eds., *Deutsche illustrierte Flugblätter des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts: Die Sammlung der Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel*, vol. 111, Tübingen 1989, pp. 238–239.

54 This unsigned engraving has German captions only. See Imke Lüders, 'Totenreigen-Totentanz: Totentanzillustrationen auf Flugblättern des Barock und ihre Rezeption', in Uli Wunderlich ed., *L'art macabre 1: Jahrbuch der Europäischen Totentanz-Vereinigung*, Düsseldorf 2000, pp. 97–113; Eva Schuster, *Mensch und Tod: Graphiksammlung der Universität Düsseldorf*, Düsseldorf 1989, p. 418.

55 Berlin Kupferstichkabinett, print 942–133 KDA. This print differs from that of the Master 'J.W' only in the style of writing on the cartouches and individual nuances in the drawing, and should also be dated to the second half of the seventeenth century. The German texts of the two prints are nearly identical.

56 This engraving has German captions and is signed *I.P. Wolff seel: Erben exc.*. It was published by the heirs to the book dealer Johann Peter Wolff (1655–c.1702), implying that it



FIGURE 32 Attributed to the Master J.W., Dance of Death, second half of 17th century.

PHOTOGRAPH: © GRAPHIKSAMMLUNG 'MENSCH UND TOD' DER HEINRICH-HEINE-UNIVERSITÄT DÜSSELDORF (INVENTORY NUMBER: E 0752)

was executed after Wolff's death: Lüders, 2000, pp. 103–106. The impression of this engraving in the Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf has been heightened with watercolour, unlike that in the Berlin Kupferstichkabinett (778–136 KDA). See also Muczkowski, 1929, p. 133; Schuster, 1989, p. 429.

of Augsburg.⁵⁷ It is one of the less-accomplished seventeenth-century prints from this group that provided the likely model for the Kraków painting although, given that the two engravings are so close in appearance, it is difficult to establish which would have been used. Both depict the dancing circle on a plain background and they are the only prints in the group in which the border figures have been reversed as a consequence of copying from another print, therefore matching the direction in which the figures face on the canvas. A significant idiosyncrasy is that, unlike the more accomplished earlier print by Fürst, these cruder engravings show a woman in the dancing circle wearing a jester's hat, a noticeable feature repeated in the painting.

The detailed, yet crudely-executed, German print that became the model for the Kraków painting was altered in several ways for the commission by the Observant Franciscans. Most overtly, textual explanations in Polish were added, as described above; these are twice as long and, in the border scenes, more complex than the German rhyming couplets of the engravings.⁵⁸ The artist's skilful brushwork, meanwhile, enabled him to enhance the overall detail of the composition, for example by transforming the clumsy skeletons of the engraving into convincing personifications of Death and adding detail to the landscape backgrounds in the border images. Certain elements that were considered superfluous, such as the ribbons and candlesticks which decorate the borders of the engravings, were discarded. While retaining the *memento mori* symbols of skull and hourglass at the top of the print, as well as the skull,

57 Signed *Joh. Elias Ridinger excudit Aug. Vind.*, this print has Latin and German captions and is the largest and most intricate of this group of Dance of Death prints, measuring 675mm by 500mm. See Martin Knauer, 'Der erinnerte Tod', in Wolfgang Harms and Michael Schilling eds., *Das illustrierte Flugblatt in der Kultur der Frühen Neuzeit*, Frankfurt am Main and New York 1998, pp. 157–159; Eustache Hyacinthe Langlois, *Essai historique, philosophique et pittoresque sur les Danses des Morts*, vol. II, Rouen 1851, pp. 63–67; Schuster, 1989, pp. 275–276; Eva Schuster, ed., *Taniec śmierci od późnego średniowiecza do końca XX wieku*, exhibition catalogue, Zamek Książąt Pomorskich w Szczecinie 20 March–12 May 2002 and Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie 3 September–20 October 2002, Szczecin 2002, pp. 100–101; Kerssemakers, Van Pagée and Visser, 2000, pp. 55–56. For this and other death-related prints by Ridinger, see Niemeyer, 2001, pp. 94–112.

58 The most noticeable difference between the German and Polish texts can be seen in the central scene. In the German prints, they describe how, through Christ's sacrifice, death has been destroyed and life regained ('Der Todt Christi zu nicht hat gmacht/ Den Todt, und Sleben wider bracht'), and how death and eternal pain in hell is caused by sin alone ('Den Todt und ewig hellisch pein/ Hat veruhrsagt die Sund allein'). Although these are taken from the Fürst print, the five German engravings are accompanied by almost identical captions.

the vessel for holy water and the aspergillum at the base of the border, the Kraków artist also eliminated the symbols of burial to the left and right (a bier and gravediggers' tools). It is in their place that he was able to incorporate new depictions of members of the religious orders and non-Christians, the second of which deserves particular attention, especially in relation to its impact upon later such commissions in Poland-Lithuania.

The involvement of the Observant Franciscans in conversions to Catholicism in Poland-Lithuania may have prompted the inclusion of an image of non-Christians in the Kraków *taniec śmierci*, despite the lack of such a scene in the related German engravings.⁵⁹ The scene and its highly derogatory accompanying text, however, also betrays the existence of xenophobia and anti-Semitism in seventeenth-century Polish-Lithuanian society, which religious communities harnessed to further their message of Death's ubiquity:

Bawdy Turks, ugly Jews/ How is Death not disgusted by you/ It ignores
Jewish odours/ And dances with savage nations.⁶⁰

Turks are described as 'bawdy' here in reference to their harems, but the inclusion of this 'savage nation' is more likely due to the frequent military conflict between the Ottoman Empire and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the seventeenth century; untypically for this painting, a winged Death is shown approaching the figure of an Ottoman Turk, demonstrating that this dangerous adversary is to be dealt a quick and silent death.⁶¹ Death is less cautious with the Jewish man, however, whose faith it mocks by wearing a kippah as it dances towards him; the text of the caption, meanwhile, draws upon the anti-Semitic *foetor judaicus* ('Jewish stench') motif that had existed in European Christian literary and folk contexts since the Middle Ages in reference to the supposed 'stench of disbelief that holy waters alone can wash away'.⁶² Given the large

59 A German eighteenth-century painting also modelled on these prints did not include the scene with non-Christians. See Aleksandra Koutny-Jones, 'A Macabre Mystery: The Wellcome Library's Dance of Death', *Wellcome History*, L, Summer 2012, pp. 14–16.

60 'Sprośni Turcy Brzydzy Żydzi/ Jak się wami Śmierć nie hydzi/ Na Żydowskie niedba Smrody/ Z dzikimi skacze Narody'.

61 For references to war in Polish-Lithuanian Dances of Death, see Koutny-Jones, 2006, pp. 95–106. For the iconography of the winged Death, see Panofsky, 1964, pp. 221–236. For images of Ottoman Turks in early modern European art, see James G. Harper, ed., *The Turk and Islam in the Western Eye, 1450–1750: Visual Imagery before Orientalism*, Farnham 2011.

62 Leonid Livak, *The Jewish Persona in the European Imagination: A Case of Russian Literature*, Stanford 2010, p. 93.

Jewish community in Kazimierz on the outskirts of Kraków,⁶³ the decision to include this scene may be a direct reflection of local religious tensions and social prejudices within the former capital city.⁶⁴ While certain Western European Dances of Death had incorporated depictions of both Ottoman Turks and Jews, an early example being Niklaus Manuel Deutsch's since-destroyed Bern Dance of Death fresco of 1516–1519,⁶⁵ it is clear that the Kraków artist made a conscious decision to divert from the convenience of his printed prototype in order to include them. By doing so, he also set a precedent for derivative eighteenth-century Polish-Lithuanian Dances of Death that were modelled to varying degrees upon the Kraków painting, all of which include the scene with non-Christians. These paintings can be found at the Bernardine friary of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, just south-west of Kraków (dated 1769),⁶⁶ the Dominican (previously Observant Franciscan) church in Święta Anna, east of Częstochowa;⁶⁷ the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Węgrów (Fig. 33),⁶⁸ and the Church of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth (formerly part of a Birgittine convent) in Hrodna in Belarus.⁶⁹

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- 63 Kraków's Jewish community had been relocated to nearby Kazimierz in the late fifteenth century. As Hanna Zaremska has emphasised, 'though Kazimierz formed an integral part of the Kraków conurbation, it was, constitutionally speaking, an autonomous urban centre with its own municipal authority'. Hanna Zaremska, 'Crossing the River: How and Why the Jews of Kraków Settled in Kazimierz at the End of the Fifteenth Century', tr. Theresa Prout, in Adam Teller, Magda Teter and Antony Polonsky eds., *Social and Cultural Boundaries in Pre-Modern Poland, Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. xxii, Oxford 2010, p. 178.
- 64 For an historical study of anti-Semitism, see Gavin I. Langmuir, *History, Religion and Antisemitism*, Berkeley 1990. For attitudes to Jews in Poland-Lithuania, see Magda Teter, *Jews and Heretics in Catholic Poland: A Beleaguered Church in the Post-Reformation Era*, Cambridge 2009.
- 65 For the inclusion of Jews and Turks in Niklaus Manuel Deutsch's Bern Dance of Death (destroyed in 1660), see Gertsman, 2010, p. 166–167.
- 66 See Król, 2000, p. 58–59; Schuster, 2002, pp. 100–101.
- 67 For the Święta Anna version, see Kornecki, 1986, p. 216; Koutny, 2006, pp. 102–103; Topińska, 1977, p. 105. For the Święta Anna church, see Jarosław Pluciński, *Święta Anna. Kościół klasztorny sióstr dominikanek klauzurowych w Świętej Annie*, Poznań 1998.
- 68 The Węgrów Dance of Death once hung in the cemetery chapel, although it has since been moved into the church. Galicka and Sygietyńska, 1964, p. 36.
- 69 See Izabela Malczewska, 'Obrazy z kościoła pobrygidzkiego w Grodnie', in Piotr Paszkiewicz, Grażyna Ruszczyk and Maria Dłutek eds., *Ocalić dla przyszłości. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Ryszardowi Brykowskiemu*, Warsaw 2003, pp. 266–267. Also see Józef Jodkowski, 'Taniec śmierci. Obraz alegoryczny z XVII w. w Muzeum grodzieńskim', in *Muzeum w Grodnie. Sprawozdanie z czynności za rok 1923*, Hrodna 1924, pp. 41–52. For historic Catholic churches in Hrodna, including the former Birgittine convent, see Maria



FIGURE 33 *Anonymous artist, Dance of Death (detail: scene with non-Christians), 18th century, Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, Węgrów.*
 PHOTOGRAPH: J. LANGDA (INSTYTUT SZTUKI POLSKIEJ AKADEMII NAUK, WARSAW)

The Hrodna Dance of Death, a crudely-executed painting dated to the second half of the eighteenth century, is the furthest removed from the German printed prototypes and includes an additional disturbing element to the aforementioned anti-Semitic iconography. The central scene is not that of the circular dance but

Kałamajska-Saeed and Dorota Piramidowicz, *Kościół i klasztor rzymskokatolickie dawnego województwa trockiego*, vol. 1, Kraków 2012.

instead a depiction of two devils fishing symbols of earthly power, such as crowns and religious headdresses, from a lake. Naked human figures also swim in the lake, themselves eager to grab these treasured trophies. Such imagery draws upon the allegorical understanding of Death as a fisherman, which had been popular in Lithuanian death-related literature since the seventeenth century.⁷⁰ Standing on the banks of the lake, furthermore, is a Jewish man who throws a pile of gold coins into the air as a third devil defecates into his mouth, reflecting the endurance in Central Europe of the medieval association between Jews and the Devil, as well as the belief that those wanting to counter baptism would bathe in faeces.⁷¹ This obscene depiction and the consistent use of derisive visual and textual references to Jewish people in this group of Polish-Lithuanian Dances of Death, which endured in nineteenth-century Polish versions of the theme,⁷² indicate that this macabre motif had the potential to be harnessed for anti-Semitic propaganda comparable in its potency with better-known European examples of the 'visual rhetoric of hate and bigotry' such as the iconography of the '*Judensau*' ('Jewish sow') or the '*Korn Jude*' ('grain Jew').⁷³

70 Tereškinas, 2005, pp. 192–193.

71 See Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and its Relation to Modern Antisemitism*, New Haven 1943; Livak, 2010, p. 93. For negative attitudes towards Jews in the eighteenth-century Polish-Lithuanian Catholic Church, see Gershon David Hundert, 'Identity formation in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth', in Karin Friedrich and Barbara M. Pendzich eds., *Citizenship and Identity in a Multinational Commonwealth: Poland-Lithuania in Context, 1550–1772*, Leiden and Boston 2009, pp. 131–147. For a wider study of Jewish communities in eighteenth-century Poland-Lithuania, see Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2004.

72 These include nineteenth-century paintings at the Observant Franciscan church in Warsaw and the Franciscan church in Kalwaria Paławska near Przemyśl, as well as a painting by Seweryn Krauz (born in 1813 in Kraków) at the National Museum in Poznań. For the Czerniaków painting, see Koutny, 2006, p. 103; Topińska, 1977, pp. 102–105. For Seweryn Krauz's version, see Dziubkova, 1996, pp. 279–280; Król, 2000, p. 61. A crude series of mid. nineteenth-century oil paintings at the Chapel of Mary of the Angels in Bochnia, just east of Kraków, also continue the iconography of the border scenes of the Kraków Dance of Death. See Marian Kornecki, 'Bocheńska seria obrazków "Tańca śmierci". Przyczynek do trwałości wątku moralizatorskiego *memento mori* w środowisku prowincjonalnym XIX wieku', *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, XL, no. 3–4, 1986, pp. 207–220.

73 For early prints of the '*Judensau*' and the anti-Semitic motif of the Blessed Simon Martyr, see Parshall and Schoch, 2005, pp. 208–212. The quotation is taken from p. 210 of this publication. For the imagery of the '*Korn Jude*', see Arthur H. Williamson, 'The Nation Epidemical: Scoto-Britannus to Scoto-Polonus', in Richard Unger ed., *Britain and Poland-Lithuania: Contact and Comparison from the Middle Ages to 1795*, Leiden and Boston 2008, pp. 298–300.

There is an untypical consistency in the *taniec śmierci* canvases commissioned by the religious orders across Polish-Lithuanian in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, deriving as most of them do from a common group of German printed prototypes that were updated in various ways to facilitate engagement with local audiences. While the foremost religious patrons of such imagery in the Commonwealth were the Observant Franciscans, an unrelated Dance of Death cycle was painted in 1767 in Kraków for another branch of the Franciscan Order, the Capuchins,⁷⁴ by Kraków-based artist Antoni Gruszecki (1734–1798). The four paintings in Gruszecki's series include members of the religious and social elite, ranging from a pope, cardinal and Franciscan friar, to an emperor and young wealthy couple, in addition to a Triumph of Death image of a skeleton wearing a crown and royal red cloak.⁷⁵

The social range depicted in this Capuchin *taniec śmierci* is much narrower than that explored in the Observant Franciscan versions and so does not allow as close a reflection upon Polish-Lithuanian society as a whole, especially since Gruszecki's cycle lacks any accompanying text. The commissioning of this unprecedented Capuchin Dance of Death in eighteenth-century Kraków again demonstrates that this former capital city, with its plethora of religious orders, remained a focal point for fresh renditions of macabre iconography throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, encapsulating core themes such as the Triumph of Death, Wheel of Death and, most significantly, the Dance of Death.

Conclusion

Macabre encounters as described and depicted in the related themes of the Three Living and the Three Dead and the Dance of Death were not unknown

74 For the Capuchin Order, see Father Cuthbert, *The Capuchins: a Contribution to the History of the Counter-Reformation*, 2 vols., London 1928; Duncan Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Medieval Franciscan Order: from Saint Francis to the Foundation of the Capuchins*, Rome 1987. For Polish Capuchins, see Józef Marecki and Roland Prejs, *Zarys historii kapucynów w Polsce*, Kraków 2004.

75 For Gruszecki (also known as Antoni Ignacy Dombrowski), see Jolanta Maurin-Białostocka et al., *Słownik artystów polskich i obcych w Polsce działających: malarze, rzeźbiarze, graficy*, vol. 11, Wrocław 1975, pp. 501–503; Andrzej Ryszkiewicz, 'Malarz Antoni Gruszecki vel Dombrowski bazylijanin w Supraślu', *Rocznik Białostocki*, VII, 1966, pp. 105–131. For Gruszecki's Dance of Death, see Jerzy Żmudziński, 'Taniec śmierci – Cykl obrazów z 1767 roku autorstwa Antoniego Gruszeckiego z klasztoru Kapucynów w Krakowie', *Krzysztofory. Zeszyty naukowe Muzeum Historycznego Miasta Krakowa*, XX, 1998, pp. 18–38. See also Nowak and Turdza, 2000, pp. 25–26 and 31.

outside Western Europe during the medieval period, although their uptake in monumental art was sporadic and the transmission of such iconography requires careful tracking. The isolated adoption of the Three Living and the Three Dead in a fourteenth-century wall painting at Toruń Cathedral in Poland, for example, probably owes a debt to the city's Hanseatic contacts, just as the commissioning of Bernt Notke's fifteenth-century Dance of Death in Tallinn is thought to have been enabled by Hanseatic trade routes. While the Dance of Death was not propagated in Polish or Lithuanian painted and printed artwork of the later Middle Ages, this may have been as a result of patron preference rather than a lack of information; members of religious and learned communities in medieval Poland certainly came into contact with the concept of the *danse macabre* while studying abroad and transmitted the theme to wider audiences through sermons and homilies. Late-medieval Polish vernacular literature, meanwhile, confronted comparable themes in works such as *Dialog Mistrza Polikarpa ze Śmiercią*, a piece meant for theatrical enactment, which bore close relation to Western European texts and drew upon the performative traditions that lay at the heart of the Dance of Death.

Although the Dance of Death was adapted for printing as early as the fifteenth century, the widespread circulation of such texts and their accompanying imagery across Europe did not immediately impact upon its artistic adoption in much of Central Europe. While German printed prototypes of the *Totentanz* were crucial to the uptake of the theme in Poland-Lithuania in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, their availability alone did not precipitate this. Rather, it was the proselytising preoccupations of the revived religious orders, especially in the former capital city of Kraków, which facilitated the embedding of such macabre themes in the art of Poland-Lithuania's religious communities. The Observant Franciscans in particular, drawing upon wider Franciscan traditions of contemplating death, saw the *taniec śmierci* as an appropriate platform to propagate their religious as well as social concerns. While superficially implying that all are equal in death, the *danse macabre* model replicated in the Commonwealth's Observant Franciscan friaries in fact depicts a rigid hierarchy of individuals encountering Death, ranging from the pope and emperor through to the indigent ruling classes and hard-working peasant, with non-Christians and the fool and child relegated to the very bottom of the social ladder. The scene with non-Christians (Turks and Jews) had not been included in the German engraving upon which these works were based, but was added by the artist of the first Polish-Lithuanian Observant Franciscan Dance of Death, painted for the Church of St Bernardine of Siena in Kraków in the seventeenth century. This image, with its explicitly xenophobic and anti-Semitic textual caption, was placed directly opposite another newly-added scene showing members of the religious orders,

including Observant Franciscans, Jesuits, Paulines and Dominicans. Pitching the religious orders against non-Christians in this way alluded to the achievements of the former in bringing about conversions to Catholicism, and grouped both foreign and indigenous non-Christians together as one homogenous group, placing them near the bottom of Death's pecking order. The dense network of religious orders in the Commonwealth facilitated the dissemination of this *taniec śmierci* model beyond Kraków into other areas of Poland and even into Lithuanian territories, enabling the further propagation of xenophobic and anti-Semitic imagery under the pretext that Death equalises all.

While the earliest Dances of Death in Poland-Lithuania drew upon iconography found in foreign engravings, by the end of the eighteenth century the theme had become embedded in the artistic repertoire of religious communities, who referenced existing Polish-Lithuanian *taniec śmierci* paintings rather than resorting to imported prototypes. The indigenous maturation of this macabre motif is perhaps best expressed in the existence of an isolated late eighteenth-century *danse macabre* cycle in a wooden cemetery chapel in Zambrów in north-west Poland. Executed in 1795, the year that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was obliterated, the Zambrów wall paintings were commissioned by an ambitious parish priest, Marcin Krajewski, and were not directly dependent upon any previous painted or printed cycle.⁷⁶ They incorporate representations of exclusively local characters from all social strata, ranging from the peasant and the insurgent (Fig. 9) to drunkards (Fig. 34) and members of the powerful *szlachta*. The inclusion of a Franciscan friar, meanwhile, alludes to the earliest Western European as well as Polish-Lithuanian renditions of this theme. The Zambrów *taniec śmierci* should also be considered, however, alongside thematically-related contemporaneous publications produced in the Commonwealth such as the Reverend Józef Baka's (1707–1780)⁷⁷ irreverent *Uwagi o śmierci niechybnej* ('Remarks about an Inevitable Death'), which was first published in Vilnius in 1766 and intended as a warning to all, including the old and the young, the rich, gentlemen and ladies, knights, the clergy, foreigners, townsmen and peasants.⁷⁸ It is in such late Polish-Lithuanian artistic and textual variations

76 For the Zambrów Dance of Death, see Koutny-Jones, 2015.

77 For Józef Baka, a Jesuit, see Karol Estreicher, 'Baka Józef', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, I, 1935, pp. 222–223.

78 *Uwagi* was considered controversial as a result of its uninhibited descriptions and use of colloquial Polish. See Józef Baka, *Uwagi*, ed. Antoni Czyż and Aleksander Nawarecki, Lublin 2000. For Baka's publications, see Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, vol. XII, Kraków 1891, pp. 335–336.



FIGURE 34 *Anonymous artist, Death encouraging men to drink, 1795, Cemetery Chapel, Zambrów.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

on the Dance of Death that the enduring relevance of macabre motifs for Catholic proselytising in the Commonwealth can most clearly be discerned, demonstrating that, once introduced to this region of Central Europe, such themes developed their own momentum as well as unique characteristics.

Triumphant Funerals: Ceremonial, Coffin Portraits and Catafalques

Cardinal Enrico Caetani, (1550–1599), who visited Poland-Lithuania as Papal Legate, produced a lengthy account describing the *bellissima pompa funerale* ('most beautiful funeral pageantry') for the widow of King Stefan Batory (1533–1586)¹ and last of the powerful Jagiellonian dynasty, Queen Anna (1523–1596), daughter of King Zygmunt I Jagiellon and Bona Sforza.² Such references by foreign observers hint at the opulence of Polish-Lithuanian royal funerals at the close of the sixteenth-century. Nearly a century later, this triumphant and elaborate royal approach to funerary ceremonial had been appropriated more widely in Poland-Lithuania, as noted in the travel memoir of the Irish-born Bernard Connor (1666–1698), who resided in Poland as physician to King Jan III Sobieski (1629–1696):³

The Ceremonies of Burial in Poland are usually celebrated with so great Pomp and Magnificence, that one would rather take them for Triumphs than Enterments [sic].⁴

This chapter will argue that the visual culture of commemoration became increasingly elaborate and theatrical, as well as widespread, between the late-sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. During this period, triumphant funerals became a staple send-off for the Polish *szlachta*, who adopted them as means of self-glorification and of communicating the immortality of noble status. Moreover, since these ostentatious funerals in many ways resembled royal

1 See Jerzy Besala and Agnieszka Biedrzycka, 'Stefan Batory (Báthory István)', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XLIII, 2004–2005, pp. 114–129.

2 See Jan Władysław Woś, *I due soggiorni del card. legato E. Caetani a Varsavia (1596–1597)*, Florence 1982, p. 57ff. See also Waław Sobieski and Kazimierz Lepszy, 'Anna Jagiellonka', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, I, 1935, pp. 128–132.

3 See Kazimierz Lepszy, 'Jan III Sobieski h. Janina', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, X, 1962–1964, pp. 413–422.

4 Bernard Connor, *The History of Poland in Several Letters to Persons of Quality*, vol. II, London 1698, p. 206. See also Bernard O'Connor, *Historia Polski*, ed. Paweł Hanczewski, Warsaw, 2012.

ceremonial,⁵ the *szlachta* emulated such royal precedents to satisfy their own dynastic aspirations and assert their distinct privileges as the ruling class in Poland-Lithuania. Affluent patrons of all denominations would set about preparing lavish funerals fit for kings as a reflection of their high standing;⁶ indeed, skimping upon funeral costs would cast a cloud of shame upon a noble family, and many would rather face bankruptcy than risk social ostracism.⁷

This chapter uncovers the visual culture of these opulent Polish-Lithuanian funerals, a subject that has been little studied beyond a few Polish-language works, among which art historian Juliusz Chrościcki's classic monograph, *Pompa funebris* ('Funerary Pomp'), remains the key text.⁸ The present study assesses a variety of artistic sources, including catafalque designs, portraits and liturgical vestments, as well as ephemeral documentary sources such as published funerary literature (pamphlets distributed during the ceremonies

5 For Polish-Lithuanian royal funerals, see Almut Bues, 'The Elections, Coronations and Funerals of the Kings of Poland (1572–1764)', in J.R. Mulryne *et al.*, *Europa Triumphans: Court and Civic Festivals in Early Modern Europe*, vol. I, Aldershot and Burlington 2004, pp. 375–385.

6 The aspects of liturgy discussed in this chapter refer to Roman Catholic practice. The tradition of coffin portraiture, however, existed among the Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic communities.

7 See the example of Piotr Myszkowski (d. 1591), Bishop of Kraków, in the Introduction.

8 Juliusz A. Chrościcki, *Pompa funebris. Z dziejów kultury staropolskiej*, Warsaw 1974. Chrościcki's other publications on funerary art and literature include: Juliusz A. Chrościcki, 'Castris et astris: kazania i relacje pogrzebowe jako źródła historii sztuki', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, xxx, no. 3, 1968, pp. 384–395; Juliusz A. Chrościcki, 'Projektanci i wykonawcy katafalków z 1 połowy XVIII w.', in Jan Białostocki *et al.*, *Rokoko. Studia nad sztuką 1 połowy XVIII w. Materiały sesji Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki zorganizowanej wspólnie z Muzeum Śląskim we Wrocławiu. Wrocław, październik 1968*, Warsaw 1970, pp. 251–273; Juliusz A. Chrościcki, 'Pomniki sławy żołnierskiej. Od kurhanów i piramid z kości do monumentalnych dekoracji pogrzebowych (XV–XVIII w.)', in *I podaje wiek wiekowi: tradycje Chrześcijańskie w dziejach polskiego oręża*, exhibition catalogue, Muzeum Wojska Polskiego September 2001–March 2002, Warsaw 2001, pp. 93–98; Juliusz A. Chrościcki, 'Oswajanie śmierci pięknem', *Barok*, xi/1 (21), 2004, pp. 17–39. In addition to these art historical studies, an important analysis of approaches to death and burial in seventeenth-century Vilnius is provided in the recent monograph by philologist David Frick. See Frick, 2013, pp. 356–399. For transcriptions of wills from Vilnius archives, see also Małgorzata Borkowska, *Dekret w niebieskim. ferowany parlamencie: wybór testamentów z XVII i XVIII wieku*, Kraków 1984. A more general overview of seventeenth-century Lithuanian funerals and attitudes to death is provided in Tereškinas, 2005, pp. 182–233. As in Poland-Lithuania, funerary literature was widely published in early modern Hungary; see Gábor Kecskeméti, *Prédikáció, retorika, irodalomtörténet: A magyar nyelvű halotti beszéd a 17. században*, Budapest 1998. For illustrated Hungarian funerary publications, see also Knapp and Tüskés, 2003, pp. 76–77.

or, more often, printed later as a record of the event and incorporating transcriptions of sermons). Looking in turn at triumphant funerary processions, trends in temporary church decorations and catafalque design, and the distinctive Polish-Lithuanian tradition of the 'coffin portrait' (*portret trumienny*), the chapter concludes with a case study that places funerary practice in context, focusing upon the burials of the Opaliński magnate family. Surviving funeral pamphlets and painted sarcophagi of the Opalińskis provide a particularly detailed insight into Polish-Lithuanian commemorative culture, demonstrating how pan-European and indigenous traditions intermingled to balance didactic messages about death with an overt desire for familial glorification.

While the previous chapters of this study have primarily dealt with the assimilation of *memento mori* iconography into Polish-Lithuanian moralising religious art, especially that of the mendicant orders, this chapter takes a different direction, focusing exclusively upon this patronage by wealthy elites. Furthermore, on account of the separate preoccupations of these patrons, we see an alternative perspective on death from that discussed in earlier chapters; while the macabre arts commissioned by the religious orders emphasised a precautionary message and themes of judgement, many of the artworks and rituals discussed in this chapter are more triumphant in tone and emphasise the transgression of mortality.

Processional Pomp: Heraldic Displays and the Theatre of Death

Roman Catholic funerals in Poland-Lithuania followed a set pattern, which provides a fundamental foundation for understanding the religious context for the procession and other aspects of funerary practice. The Catholic Church in the Commonwealth adhered to the *Ordo exequiarum* (Order of Funeral Service) of the *Rituale Romanum* (Roman Ritual, revised following the Council of Trent and published in 1614), which had been approved as part of the Polish *Rituale Petricoviense* (Piotrków Ritual) in 1631, standardising the ritual for the vigil.⁹ After death, the body was appropriately attired¹⁰ and laid out in splendour, usually in the home of the deceased, where it was sprinkled with holy water: a reference to baptism, and therefore spiritual rebirth through Christ. Once mourners had paid their respects to the deceased and the funeral preparations

9 See Alfons Labudda, *Liturgia pogrzebu w Polsce do wydania Rytuału Piotrkowskiego (1631): studium historyczno-liturgiczne*, Warsaw 1983.

10 For burial clothing in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Poland-Lithuania, see Anna Drażkowska, *Odzież grobowa w Rzeczypospolitej w XVII i XVIII wieku*, Toruń 2008.

had been made, the body was taken in procession to the church where it was laid on a catafalque. Following the Requiem Mass and subsequent prayers, the body would be taken in procession once more from the church to the place of disposition. Prayers would then be said at the place of committal before lowering the coffin into the grave; finally, relatives would make speeches praising the deceased, before inviting the mourners to a lavish reception at which they were treated to a range of alcoholic beverages such as mead, beer and vodka.¹¹ Unsurprisingly, these celebrations were often raucous and noisy, made louder on occasion by extravagant entertainment such as firework displays. The entire preparations and ceremonial varied in length, depending on the wealth of the deceased and the complexity of planning the funeral, with many deceased having to wait weeks or even months before they were finally buried.¹²

This section focuses upon one aspect of this intricate ceremonial: the initial funerary procession that led the body and the gathered mourners to the church. This grand procession was a key element of the funerary routine for royalty and *szlachta* alike, marked by decorations including heraldic symbols, flags and triumphal arches, all of which were structures more usually associated with celebratory events such as coronations. Processions were also a feature of elite burgher funerals, where guild dress and banners could take the place of heraldic motifs.¹³ We now turn, therefore, to an examination of these decorations and heraldry, considering the visual symbolism and elaborate theatrical devices employed on such occasions.

While most of the temporary decorations created for Polish-Lithuanian funerary processions have been lost, a rare glimpse into their appearance can be found in one of a series of four watercolours recording the funeral of noblewoman Brigida (or Brigitta) Czapska née Działyńska in 1762, at the Church of the Reformed Franciscans in Pakość, south-west of Toruń, founded by the Działyński family (Fig. 35).¹⁴ Brigida was only sixteen when she died, and had recently married the *wojewoda* (chief provincial governor or palatine) of Malbork; this early loss of life, at such a crucial moment, would have affected the influential Działyński and Czapski noble dynasties greatly. Painted by an unknown artist, the watercolours of Brigida's funeral are attached to one copy of a pamphlet entitled *Widok załobny dwóch znakomitych pogrzebow* ('A View of Two Splendid

11 Records from the funeral of Catholic merchant Stefan Rabcewicz (d. 1664) in Vilnius indicate that a generous spread of 'fish, spices, beer, vodka, and mead' was served to the mourners. Quoted in Frick, 2013, p. 384.

12 See Juliusz Chrościcki, 'Od śmierci do egzekwii', in Dziubkova, 1996, p. 28–33.

13 As recorded among the burgher communities of Vilnius. See Frick, 2013, p. 385.

14 For the Działyński and Czapski noble families, see Friedrich, 2000, pp. 24–25.



FIGURE 35 *Anonymous artist, Procession at the funeral of Brigida Czapska née Działyńska, 1762, inserted into: Benedykt Roszkowski, Widok żałobny dwóch znakomitych pogrzebow, Poznań 1762.*

PHOTOGRAPH: BIBLIOTEKA JAGIELLOŃSKA, KRAKÓW

Funerals'), written by the Reverend Benedykt Roszkowski, who conducted her funeral.¹⁵ Closely relating to the text of the pamphlet, the watercolours show, in turn, Brigida's body laid out on her deathbed; the procession; the catafalque; and the catafalque within the context of the church decoration. The pink hues in the watercolours reflect the generous use of costly crimson damask described in Brigida's funeral pamphlet, a popular colour for funerary decorations.

Brigida's funerary procession, having passed through Poznań, is shown on the final leg of its journey, meandering from the important Jerusalem pilgrimage site at Pakość towards the Church of the Reformed Franciscans; its watercolour depiction recalls the established European iconography of triumphal processions that snake towards their destination, passing beneath

15 The pamphlet containing watercolours is in the Jagiellonian Library in Kraków; other copies survive, for example in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, but are not accompanied by drawings. See Benedykt Roszkowski, *Widok żałobny dwóch znakomitych pogrzebow*, Poznań 1762. See also Chrościcki, 2004, pp. 23–24; Dziubkova, 1996, p. 283; Mrozowski, 2000, p. 161. Benedykt Roszkowski was also involved in the funerals of other members of the Działyński family. See Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, vol. xxvi, Kraków 1915, pp. 385–386.

Roman-inspired triumphal arches.¹⁶ The coffin is at the back, with various groups of religious and lay mourners preceding it, including priests and members of the religious orders, soldiers and representatives of the Poznań guilds, many of them carrying candles and some bearing crosses. They pass beneath triumphal arches that visually reference the heraldry of the deceased woman; notable in the right foreground is an arch topped by an upward-pointing arrow that represents the 'Ogończyk' coat of arms of the Działyński family. The incorporation of heraldry not only glorified Brigida but also her family, whose preparation of the ceremonial bore witness to their wealth and elevated social status.

In addition to heraldic emblems, at funerals such as Brigida's specific emphasis was also placed upon the physical appearance of the deceased, which was remembered through portraits that could be carried in the procession. This compares, albeit indirectly, to the wax or wooden funeral effigies showing the recumbent figure commissioned for lavish ceremonies in other European states; for example the royal effigies on display at Westminster Abbey, among them those of Henry VII (1457–1485) and Elizabeth I (1533–1603), which were placed on the hearse during the funeral.¹⁷ The incorporation of portraits into Polish-Lithuanian *szlachta* funerals is described in the funeral pamphlets of Brigida's father, August Działyński, and her elder sister Dorota, who had also recently married into the Czapski family and died young, at the age of twenty.¹⁸ In each case, a portrait of the deceased was placed within a funeral carriage¹⁹ and taken in procession to the church; the coffin itself was not transported in

16 See Marina Dmitrieva-Einhorn, 'Ephemeral Ceremonial Architecture in Prague, Vienna and Cracow in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries', tr. Anna Linton, in J. R. Mulryne and Elizabeth Goldring eds., *Court Festivals of the European Renaissance: Art, Politics and Performance*, Aldershot and Burlington 2002, pp. 363–390; Margaret M. McGowan, 'The Renaissance Triumph and its Classical Heritage', in *Ibid.*, pp. 26–47.

17 See Anthony Harvey and Richard Mortimer, eds., *The Funeral Effigies of Westminster Abbey*, Woodbridge 2003; Jennifer Woodward, *The Theatre of Death: The Ritual Management of Royal Funerals in Renaissance England, 1570–1625*, Woodbridge 1997. See also Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, Princeton 1997, pp. 419–431.

18 The funeral pamphlets of the Działyński sisters, who both died young, are important sources for the eighteenth-century burials of noblewomen in Poland-Lithuania. Seventeenth-century printed funeral orations of Polish noblewomen are the subject of a recent monograph by Urszula Kicińska. See Urszula Kicińska, *Wzorzec szlachcianki w polskich drukowanych oracjach pogrzebowych XVII wieku*, Warsaw 2013.

19 For ceremonial carriages, see Teresa Żurawska, *Paradne pojazdy w Polsce XVI–XVIII wieku*, Warsaw and Kraków 1989, pp. 173–174.

this carriage but separately, making a distinction between the physical dead body and the memorial image.²⁰ In this way, the portrait took on the role of the deceased and would be conveyed in style; in fact, at Dorota Czapska's funeral, her portrait was 'pinned up' inside the carriage, perhaps to give the illusion of the deceased sitting inside.

The eighteenth-century Czapski funerals, with their pronounced emphasis upon heraldry and the physical appearance of the deceased, were in no way unusual in Poland-Lithuania, however, but followed in the footsteps of funerary traditions already embedded there by the seventeenth century. Several ornate title pages of *szlachta* funeral pamphlets, although not explicitly intended to act as illustrations of funerary practice, indicate a striking theatrical and allegorical attitude to burial culture. A jarring juxtaposition of heraldic pomp and macabre iconography, for example, features in a Lithuanian pamphlet in memory of the Minsk standard-bearer Kazimierz Krzysztof Kłokocki (c. 1625–1684), published in Sluck (now Slutsk in Belarus), where the Orleans-educated Kłokocki oversaw the running of the local printing press.²¹ In a particularly complex allegory, the accomplished Lithuanian engraver Aleksander Tarasewicz, (c. 1650–1727?) portrayed a half-length figure of the armour-clad nobleman hovering above his coffin within the heraldic knotted shawl of his coat of arms of Nałęcz (Fig. 36).²² This elevated likeness overshadows an armed equestrian figure of Death pursuing a stag below, a *memento mori* reference tinged with heraldic associations. Ultimately, the prominence of Kłokocki's portrait alludes to the promise of resurrection at the Last Judgement, rather than the demise of the mortal body which must be interred in the ground.

Further visual references to the deceased appeared during theatrical displays embedded within the pageantry of funerary processions; such reliance upon performance in Polish-Lithuanian cultures of mourning reflected the

20 For the portrait at August Działyński's funeral, see Roszkowski, 1762, p. 2 recto. For the portrait at Dorota Czapska's funeral, see Benedykt Roszkowski, *Obwieszczenie wspaniałego pogrzebu ś.p. Jaśnie Wielmożney Jeymości Páni, P. Doroty z Działyńskich Czapski, Kasztelanowy Chelmskiy*, Poznań 1763, p. B recto.

21 For Kłokocki, see Paulina Buchwald-Pelcowa, 'Kłokocki Kazimierz Krzysztof h. Nałęcz', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XIII, 1967–1968, p. 64. For Kłokocki and the Slutsk printing press, see Paulina Buchwald-Pelcowa, 'Kazimierz Krzysztof Kłokocki i drukarnia w Slucku', *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce*, XII, 1967, pp. 135–172.

22 See Marcin Kuczwarewicz, *Nałęcz Abo Fascia Tromby Smiertelney*, Slutsk 1685. For Marcin Kuczwarewicz (or Kuczwarewicz), see Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, vol. XX, Kraków 1905, pp. 361–362. For Aleksander Tarasewicz (or Tarasowicz), see Talbierska, 2011, pp. 191–206.



FIGURE 36 *Aleksander Tarasewicz*, Commemorative illustration portraying nobleman Kazimierz Krzysztof Kłokocki in: *Marcin Kuczwarewicz*, *Nałęcz Abo Fascia Tromby Smiertelney, Slutsk 1685*.

PHOTOGRAPH: BIBLIOTEKA NARODOWA, WARSAW

close links that had existed between death and dancing since the Middle Ages. Opulent funerals sometimes incorporated an *archimimus*, an actor dressed in the robes of the deceased, riding on horseback through the procession. Enabling the dead to participate in their own funerals, the role of the *archimimus* alluded to Roman ceremonial²³ and had a long, albeit not continuous, tradition in Poland. The earliest records of impersonations of the deceased at a Polish funeral date from that of King Kazimierz Wielki (Casimir the Great, 1310–1370),²⁴ a tradition that was revived at King Zygmunt I Jagiellon's funeral in 1548. Thereafter, an *archimimus* appeared at burials of the *szlachta*, as well as royalty,²⁵ sometimes to dramatic effect: towards the end of the funerals of state dignitaries and military heroes, he would ride into the church and fall from his horse by the catafalque, as documented in the case of King Zygmunt II August (or Sigismund II Augustus, 1520–1572), the last Jagiellonian king of Poland and the first sole ruler of a united Poland and Lithuania.²⁶ A century later, however, reports suggest that this practice had got out of hand since, in 1682, the Bishop of Vilnius, Mikołaj Stefan Pac (c. 1623–1684),²⁷ felt the need to issue a pastoral letter speaking out against these dangerous equestrian funerary rituals.²⁸

On occasion, the already elaborate concept of the *archimimus* was developed further. At what is thought to have been one of the grandest Polish-Lithuanian military funerals – that of *hetman* Stefan Czarniecki (1599–1665),²⁹ famous for his role during the devastating Swedish invasion of the mid-seventeenth century – a life-size painted cut-out of Czarniecki parading through his own funeral on horseback was used to immortalise the notion of a

23 For the *archimimus* at Roman funerals, see Jocelyn M.C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, London 1971, p. 48. See also Valerie M. Hope, *Death in Ancient Rome: A Sourcebook*, London and New York 2007, pp. 122–126.

24 Zdzisław Kaczmarczyk, 'Kazimierz Wielki', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XII, 1966–1967, pp. 264–269.

25 Ewa Śnieżyńska-Stolot, 'About "Catafalque Paintings in Hungary" by Enikő D. Buzási', *Acta Historiae Artium*, XXI, 1977, p. 113; Mrozowski, 2000, p. 44.

26 For funerary actors dressed in the robes and armour of King Zygmunt II August, see Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, *Zbiór pamiątek historycznych o dawnej Polsce*, vol. I, Leipzig 1838, pp. 121–123. See also Chrościcki, 2001, p. 97.

27 Andrzej Rachuba, 'Pac Mikołaj Stefan h. Gozdawa', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XXIV, 1979, pp. 738–741.

28 Jakub Sawicki, *Concilia Poloniae: Źródła i studia krytyczne*, vol. II, *Synody diecezji wileńskiej i ich statuty*, Warsaw 1948, p. 85.

29 Władysław Czapliński, 'Czarniecki Stefan, herbu Łódzia', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, IV, 1938, pp. 208–211.



FIGURE 37 *Anonymous artist, Wooden cut-out of 'hetman' Stefan Czarniecki on horseback, 1665, Parish Church, Czarnca.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

patriotic hero (Fig. 37). Shown wearing armour and holding a *bulawa* (a mace with a bulbous head) denoting his military status, only the heraldry at the base of the cut-out distracts from the artwork's illusionism. Featuring the Łódzia coat of arms (discussed in greater detail later in this chapter), these heraldic

references further emphasise the dynastic continuity that was at the heart of funerary practice.³⁰

Highly triumphant and theatrical ceremonial, replete with allusions at once to Roman precedents and royal burials as well as multifaceted heraldic references, thus became increasingly prevalent among the Polish-Lithuanian nobility. Such imagery certainly emphasised the elevated social status of the deceased and their own family line, but also, perhaps, of the *szlachta* more widely. Given the distinctive role that heraldry played in the Commonwealth, with several noble families using a single coat of arms, the sense of dynastic allegiance was particularly strong on such occasions, with a considerable proportion of the mourners able to recognise their own heraldic symbols within the decorative trappings of the funerary procession. The statement of ancestral distinction, therefore, applied to the assembled community of nobles, rather than to the deceased alone.

Church Decorations and the *Castrum Doloris*

As well as the triumphal processions to the church, the funerary decorations within the church, especially the temporary architecture erected on such occasions around the catafalque, began to reflect the *szlachta*'s aspirations to royal opulence. Wider European prototypes informed this interior ornamentation, which was inspired by printed images of elaborate funerals abroad, as well as the commissioning of foreign architects to work in the Commonwealth on more prestigious projects. Alongside these new fashions, established religious symbolism continued to dictate certain adornments.

In line with widely-recognised Catholic tradition, candles were a key component of church decoration at Polish-Lithuanian funerals, in recognition of the role of the imagery of light in the Christian understanding of death and rebirth.³¹ As declared in the introit to the Requiem Mass, it is only after death

30 In researching Czarniecki's portrait, I benefited from the kind assistance of Mr Marek Mazurek, Chief Conservator of the National Museum in Kielce, who gave me private access to this artwork. For Czarniecki's portrait, see Jerzy Z. Łoziński and Barbara Wolff, eds., 'Województwo kieleckie: powiat włoszczowski', *Katalog Zabytków Sztuki w Polsce*, III, no. 12, 1966, p. 8; Marzena Maćkowska, ed., 'Ornamenta ecclesiae'. *Sztuka sakralna diecezji kieleckiej*, exhibition catalogue, Muzeum Narodowe w Kielcach, Kielce 2000, p. 69. For the tradition of painted cut-outs, see Friedrich Kobler and Karl-August Wirth, 'Figurentafel', *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, vol. VIII, 1987, pp. 950–1012.

31 For candles at funerals, see David Reginald Dendy, *The Use of Lights in Christian Worship*, London 1959, pp. 99–107.

that Christians are able to see the true light, that of heaven: *Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine: et lux perpetua luceat eis* ('Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord: and may perpetual light shine upon them'). Such liturgical understandings of light found clear expression in Polish-Lithuanian sermons. So, at the funeral of Jerzy Chodkiewicz (d. 1595), *starosta* (government official) in the Żmudź (Samogitia) region of Lithuania, the priest dwelt on the significance of candles, stating that they reminded mourners not only of the light of heaven but also of faith, love, good deeds, future glory and Christian virtue.³² Aside from their appropriate symbolism, the abundance of candles at funerals also incurred great expense, indicating the wealth of the deceased's family.³³

Candles were used especially on and around the catafalque (Fig. 38),³⁴ which was often part of a larger construction known as the *castrum doloris* (castle of grief). This decorative structure, within which the coffin would be displayed, was erected in front of the altar and acted as the major focal point for the ceremony. Such ephemeral (or temporary) architecture, popular in Poland-Lithuania as much as in the rest of Europe in the early modern period, took its inspiration from tall Roman funerary pyres.³⁵ *Castrum doloris* designs were frequently lavish, ranging from baldachin to temple, and often incorporated relevant figural sculpture, for example virtues, putti or skeletal figures of Death (Figs. 38 and 39).³⁶ The survival of some such funerary sculptures may indicate that they were intended for repeated use.

Roman-style *castrum doloris* architecture became incorporated into funerary ritual for Polish-Lithuanian rulers in the late sixteenth century, soon after the first such structures in Europe were erected to mark the death of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (1500–1558). The first Polish-Lithuanian ruler to be

32 See Jan Brant, *Kazanie Pogrzebne ná one słowá Psálmu 142. Nie wstepuy Panie w sąd z sługá twoim. ić. Miane przy Pogrzebie Jaśnie Wielmożnego Páná Jego Mści Páná Jerzego Chodkiewiczá Stárosty Zmudzkiego*, Vilnius 1595, p. Aiv verso.

33 The cost of candles could reach close to ten percent of the total funeral expenses for a lavish burial. See Chrościcki, 1996, p. 28.

34 Fig. 38 shows a previously unpublished eighteenth-century *castrum doloris* design from the collections of the Print Room of the Vasyl Stefanyk Lviv National Scientific Library of Ukraine (inventory number 26807).

35 For Roman pyres, see Hope, 2007, pp. 111–115.

36 For example, a sculpture of Death holding an hourglass survives in the Olesko branch of the Lviv National Art Gallery (Fig. 39). This wooden sculpture was once polychromed and gilded. In researching the artworks at Olesko, I benefited from the kind assistance of Ms Tatiana Sabodasz of the Lviv National Art Gallery, who gave me private access to the stored collections. For this sculpture, see Dziubkova, 1996, p. 284; Kalinowski, 1993, p. 11. 100.

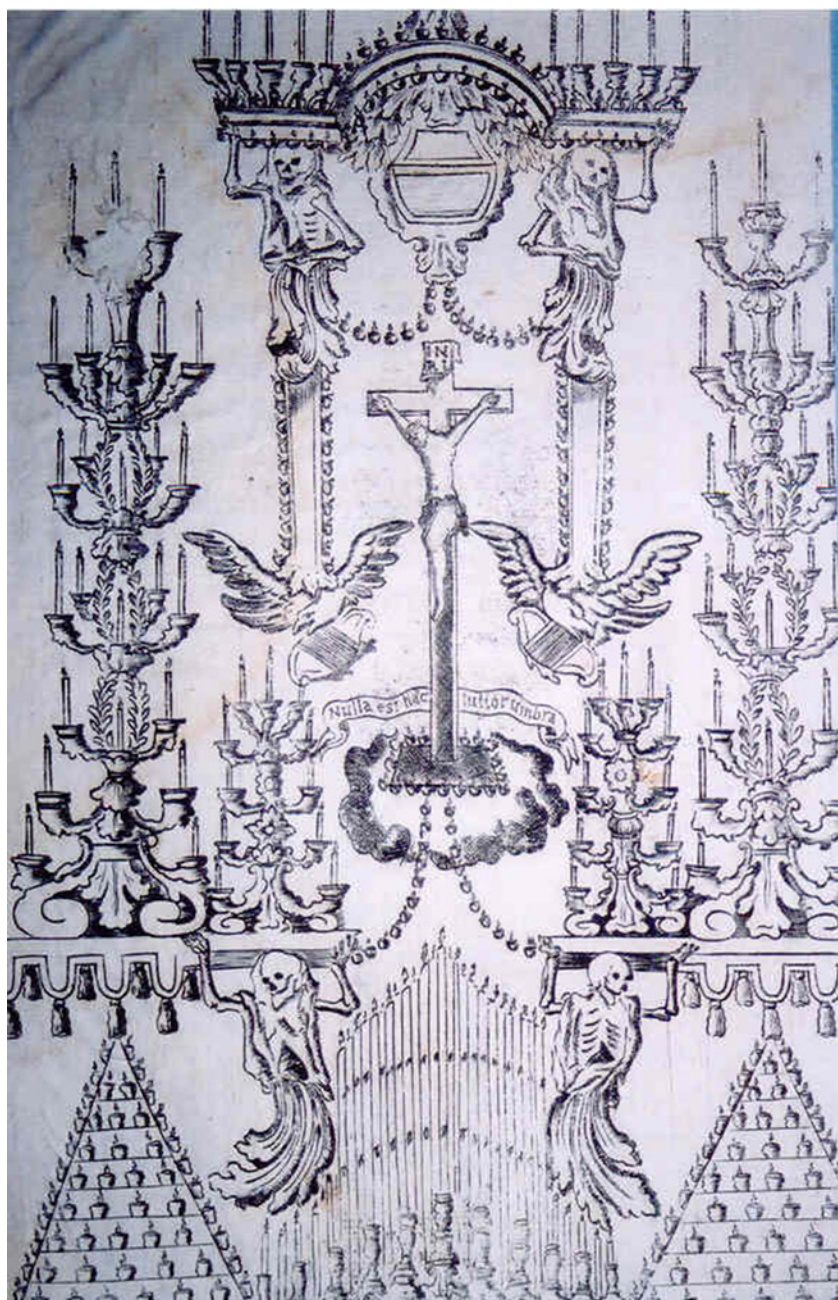


FIGURE 38 *Anonymous artist, 'Castrum doloris' design incorporating four skeletons and numerous candles (detail), 18th century, Print Room, Vasyl Stefanyk Lviv National Scientific Library of Ukraine (inventory number: 26807).*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES



FIGURE 39 *Anonymous artist, Funerary sculpture of a shrouded Death holding an hourglass, 1770s, Lviv National Art Gallery collections, Olesko.*
PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

commemorated in this way was King Zygmunt II August Jagiellon, for whom a *castrum doloris* was erected in 1572 at the Church of San Lorenzo in Damaso in Rome, commissioned as a mark of particular honour by Polish Cardinal Stanisław Hozjusz.³⁷

A detailed commemorative engraving of Zygmunt II August Jagiellon's *castrum doloris* (Fig. 40), in this case a cenotaph, has sometimes been attributed to one of the first Polish engravers, the Poznań-born Thomas Treter (1547–1610) who, as secretary to Cardinal Hozjusz, travelled to Rome, where he familiarised himself with the art of engraving.³⁸ The architecture of this lavish *castrum doloris*, the production of which was supervised by Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, was in line with the latest pan-European fashions; six years later, for instance, a comparable structure was erected for King Sebastian of Portugal.³⁹ Both designs incorporated a classical temple construction, through the pillars of which the catafalque could be viewed. Above this stood a balustrade with a commemorative inscription and candle-decked obelisks emerging from each corner and a single large obelisk at the centre, reminiscent of a Roman funerary pyre. Allegorical sculptures of birds were placed at the peak of the large obelisk and atop the two smaller obelisks at the front. In the case of Zygmunt II August, the birds chosen were eagles, an ancient emblem of victory and apotheosis,⁴⁰ as well as a symbol of Christ's Ascension. For the Portuguese king, the pelican pecking its breast was chosen, a symbol of charity that recalled Christ's sacrifice for mankind. Both birds alluded to an ultimate victory over death, thus establishing the undying might of the deceased rulers.

In imitation of these royal signifiers, the *castrum doloris* began to be used widely at funerals of the *szlachta* in seventeenth-century Poland-Lithuania, a costly tradition that was maintained throughout the eighteenth century.

37 For the *castrum doloris* in Rome, see Mâle, 1932, pp. 217–218; Liselotte Popelka, *Castrum doloris oder „Trauriger Schauplatz“. Untersuchungen zu Entstehung und Wesen ephemerer Architektur*, Vienna 1994, pp. 107–108; Katarzyna Połujan, ed., *Orzeł i trzy korony. Sąsiedztwo polsko-szwedzkie nad Bałtykiem w epoce nowożytnej (XVI–XVIII w.)*, exhibition catalogue, Zamek Królewski w Warszawie 8 April–7 July 2002, Warsaw 2002, pp. 106–107. The *castrum doloris* in Rome was more elaborate than that erected at Wawel Cathedral for Zygmunt II August's actual funeral. See Chrościcki, 1974, p. 183.

38 For the most recent attribution to Treter, see Fajt, 2012, pp. 98–99. For Treter, see Tadeusz Chrzanowski, *Działalność artystyczna Tomasza Tretera*, Warsaw 1984; Talbierska, 2011, pp. 103–109 and 368–371.

39 Popelka, 1994, p. 108.

40 For the link between the eagle and apotheosis in Ancient Rome, see Penelope J.E. Davies, *Death and the Emperor: Roman Imperial Funerary Monuments from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius*, Cambridge 2000, p. 10.

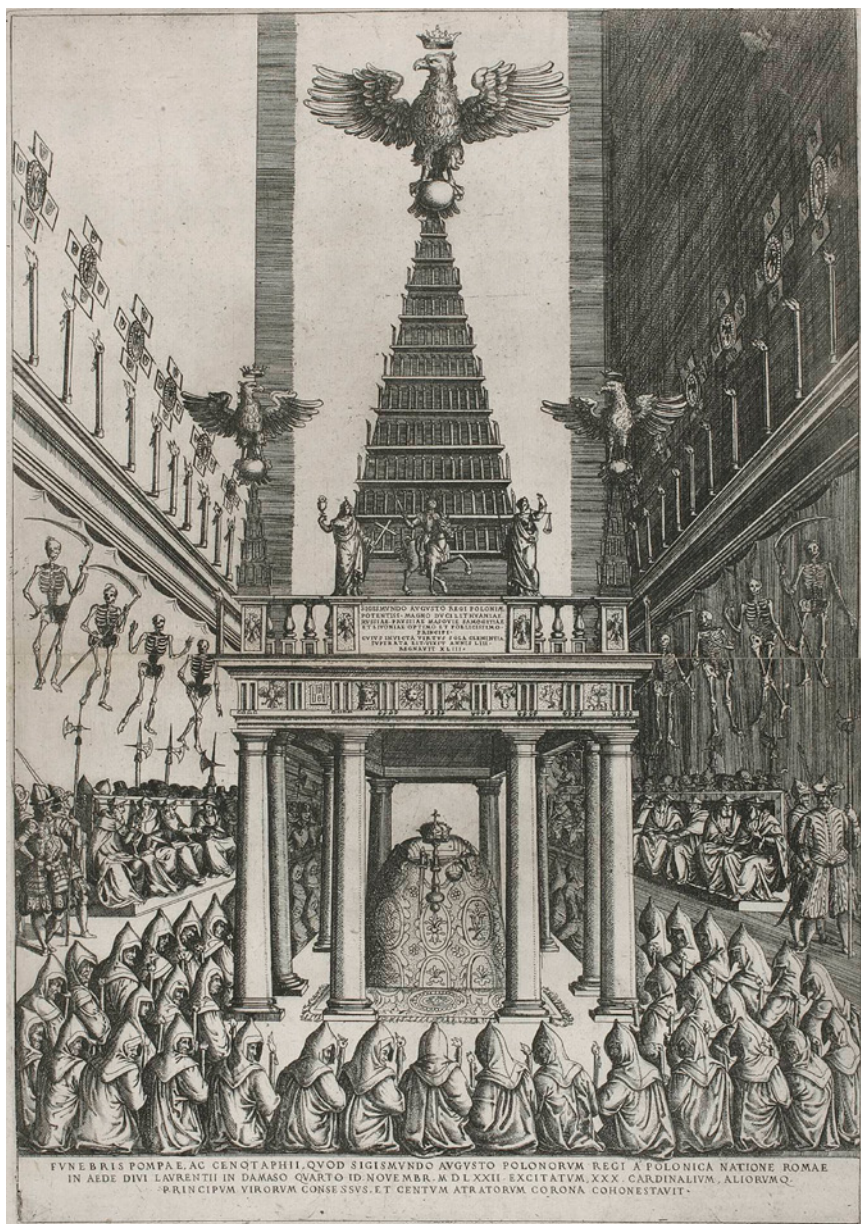


FIGURE 40 *Attributed to Thomas Treter, 'Castrum doloris' of King Zygmunt II August Jagiellon at San Lorenzo in Damaso, Rome, 1572.*

PHOTOGRAPH: MUZEUM NARODOWE W WARSZAWIE, WARSAW

Allusions to royal ceremonial were sometimes overt: the *castrum doloris* of noblewoman Zofia Wielopolska, for instance, bore close resemblance to that of King Zygmunt II August Jagiellon in its use of a Roman pyre-like structure resting on columns and topped by a bird, as demonstrated by an intricate woodcut illustration in her funeral pamphlet of 1650 (Fig. 41).⁴¹ It is likely that the design of Zofia's *castrum doloris* was inspired by printed imagery of royal funerals, such as the engraving of Zygmunt II August's funeral discussed above. In Zofia's case, however, the bird chosen to surmount the *castrum doloris* was a crow, in reference to the heraldic symbol of the Korwin *herb*, to which Zofia's family, the Kochanowskis, belonged. This example shows how Roman-inspired architecture and Polish-Lithuanian heraldic imagery were blended; indeed, since those who used the Korwin *herb* claimed Roman ancestry, the classical allusions of Zofia Wielopolska's *castrum doloris* were particularly appropriate.

Evidence of early modern European funerary decorations and catafalques is sporadic and reliant upon contemporaneous pictorial or written documentation of such temporary architecture. Surviving records from Poland-Lithuania indicate that funerary decorations were often designed by skilled members of religious communities or, in the case of more elaborate funerals, foreign architects invited to work on specific commissions. Three *castrum doloris* designers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were particularly significant in the development of such temporary architecture in Poland-Lithuania: Giovanni Battista Gisleni, Tylman van Gameren and Paweł Giżycki.

Giovanni Battista Gisleni (1600–1672), an architect from Rome, worked under the patronage of three monarchs of the Vasa dynasty: Zygmunt III, Władysław IV and Jan II Kazimierz. Although many of his architectural projects remained unrealised, and ephemeral architecture based on his designs has been lost, several of Gisleni's preparatory drawings have survived.⁴² Interspersing visits to Rome with his residence in Poland-Lithuania, the *memento mori* symbolism of Gisleni's funerary projects and sepulchral monuments mirrored the fashion for macabre iconography in his native city, notably the depictions of skeletons in the commemorative artworks of his contemporary,

41 Adrian Wieszczycki, *Archetyp albo perspektywa żałobnego rozvodu*, Kraków 1650, p. C4 recto.

42 Drawings by Gisleni are held at Sir John Soane's Museum in London; the Kupferstich-Kabinett, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden; and the Gabinetto dei Disegni e Stampe at the Castello Sforzesco in Milan. See Nina Miks, 'Zbiór rysunków G.B. Gisleńiego, architekta XVII wieku, w Sir John Soane's Museum w Londynie', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, xxiii, no. 4, 1961, pp. 328–339; Zbigniew Rewski, 'Rysunki architektoniczne z Polski w Mediolanie', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki i Kultury*, ix, 1947, no. 1–2, pp. 139–143.

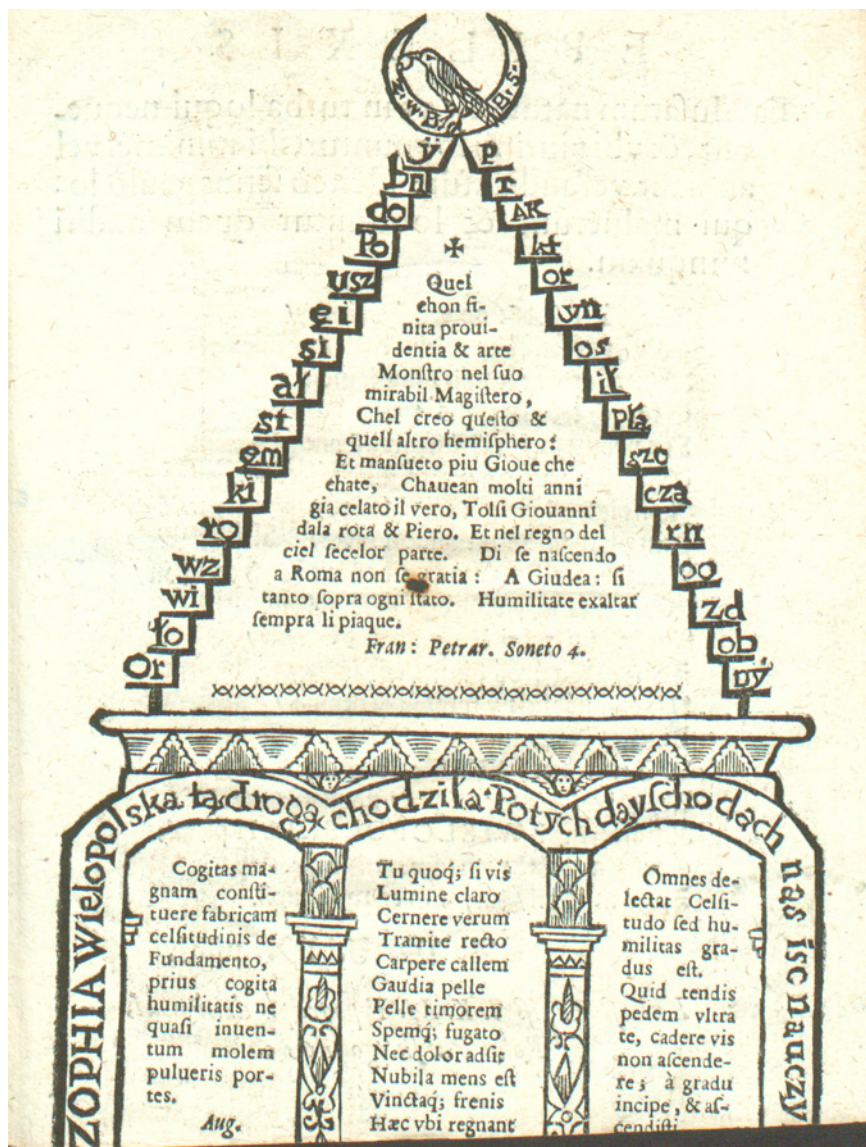


FIGURE 41 Anonymous artist, Funeral pamphlet illustration depicting the 'castrum doloris' of noblewoman Zofia Wielopolska in: Adrian Wieszczycki, *Archetyp albo perspektywa załosnego rozvodu*, Kraków 1650.

PHOTOGRAPH: BIBLIOTEKA JAGIELLOŃSKA, KRAKÓW

Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680).⁴³ Gisleni's decorations for the funeral of King Władysław IV in 1649 were intended to be particularly opulent and theatrical, although it is likely that the surviving sketches reflect the artist's intentions rather than the appearance of the final project.⁴⁴ His design for the temporary adornment of the gallery of Wawel Cathedral, for example, reveals a decorative programme preoccupied with the ornamental possibilities of skulls and skeletons (Fig. 42).⁴⁵ Rows of skulls and crossbones were the simplest element of the decoration, while full-figure 'caryatid skeletons' were to be engaged to support the columns of the gallery. Above the gallery, elegant skeletons in groups of three were to clutch candles. Skull motifs also feature in other aspects of the designs for the funeral of King Władysław IV, such as the pyramid of skulls that was to grace the main altar;⁴⁶ through this generous use of the skeletal form, Gisleni's work emphasised the ubiquity of death.

The Dutch architect Tylman van Gameren (1632–1706) was invited to Poland-Lithuania in 1660 to work for the aristocratic Lubomirski family. His 'Baroque style with classicist elements'⁴⁷ was widely admired, and his patrons included kings Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki and Jan III Sobieski, as well as members of the *szlachta*. A large number of Tylman van Gameren's designs for religious architecture, secular buildings and funerary monuments, as well as ephemeral funerary architecture, have survived, giving a detailed insight into his commissions in Poland-Lithuania.⁴⁸ While he did not use skull motifs and skeletons to

43 See Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture: Four Lectures on Its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini*, London 1992, pp. 94–95.

44 Stanisław Mossakowski, 'Uroczystości wawelskie w styczniu 1649 roku a projekty Giovanniego Battisty Gisleniego', in Stanisław Mossakowski, *Orbis Polonus. Studia z historii sztuki XVII–XVIII wieku*, Warsaw 2002, pp. 120–121.

45 For this sketch, see Nina Miks, 'Kapela królewska Wazów w rysunku G.B. Gisleniego, architekta i muzyka królewskiego', in Jan Białostocki *et al.*, *Sarmatia artistica. Księga pamiątkowa ku czci profesora Władysława Tomkiewicza*, Warsaw 1968, pp. 101–105; Mossakowski, 2002, pp. 117 and 119–120.

46 For Gisleni's sketch of this, see Mossakowski, 2002, p. 118.

47 Hempel, 1965, p. 140.

48 A large collection of Tylman's drawings is preserved in the Archiwum Tylmana z Gameren (Tylman van Gameren Archive) at the Print Room of the University of Warsaw Library. All drawings from this collection will henceforth be preceded by the abbreviation 'AT'. For this collection, see Tadeusz Makowiecki, *Archiwum planów Tylmana z Gameren, architekta epoki sobieskiego*, Warsaw 1938. For Tylman van Gameren, see Stanisław Mossakowski, *Tylman z Gameren. Architekt polskiego baroku*, Wrocław 1973; Stanisław Mossakowski, *Tilman van Gameren: Leben und Werk*, tr. Juliane Marquard-Twarowski, Munich and Berlin 1994; Stanisław Mossakowski, *Tylman z Gameren (1632–1706): twórczość architektoniczna w Polsce*, Warsaw, Munich and Berlin 2012. See also Marta Topińska *et al.*, *Tylman z*

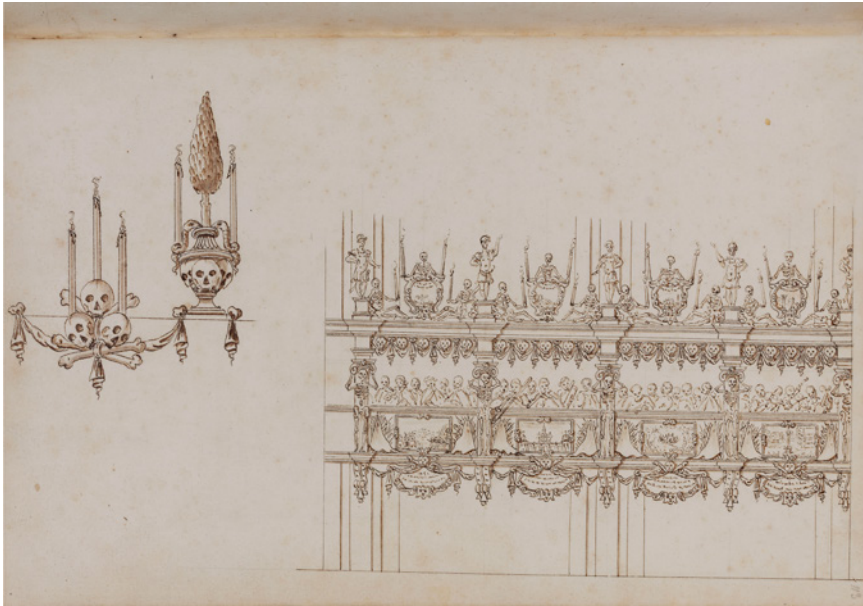


FIGURE 42 *Giovanni Battista Gisleni*, Design for the decoration of the gallery of Wawel Cathedral during the funeral of King Władysław IV, 1649, in: *Giovanni Battista Gisleni*, *Varii disegni d'architettura*, folio n3.

BY COURTESY OF THE TRUSTEES OF SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM, LONDON. PHOTOGRAPH: HUGH KELLY

the same extent as Gisleni, certain sketches demonstrate an engagement with the macabre. One of the best examples is a design for the *castrum doloris* of Gryzelda Wiśniowiecka (mother of King Michał Korybut), in which two long-limbed skeletons pictured either side of the coffin are shown raising a scythe and a spear (Fig. 43). This is just one of three surviving designs for Gryzelda's *castrum doloris*, indicating the amount of preparatory work that went into such commissions.⁴⁹

In the eighteenth century, the Polish-born Jesuit architect Paweł Giżycki (1692–1762)⁵⁰ was as esteemed for his *castrum doloris* designs as had been foreign architects in the seventeenth century. A considerable amount is known

Gameren – architekt Warszawy. Holender z pochodzenia, Polak z wyboru, exhibition catalogue, Zamek Królewski w Warszawie 22 May–13 July 2003, Warsaw 2003.

49 It is not known, however, which design was ultimately chosen for her funeral in 1672 at the Collegiate Church of St John in Warsaw (now St John's Cathedral). Topińska, 2003, pp. 158–159.

50 Maria Krasnowolska, 'Giżycki Paweł', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, VIII, 1959–1960, pp. 25–26.

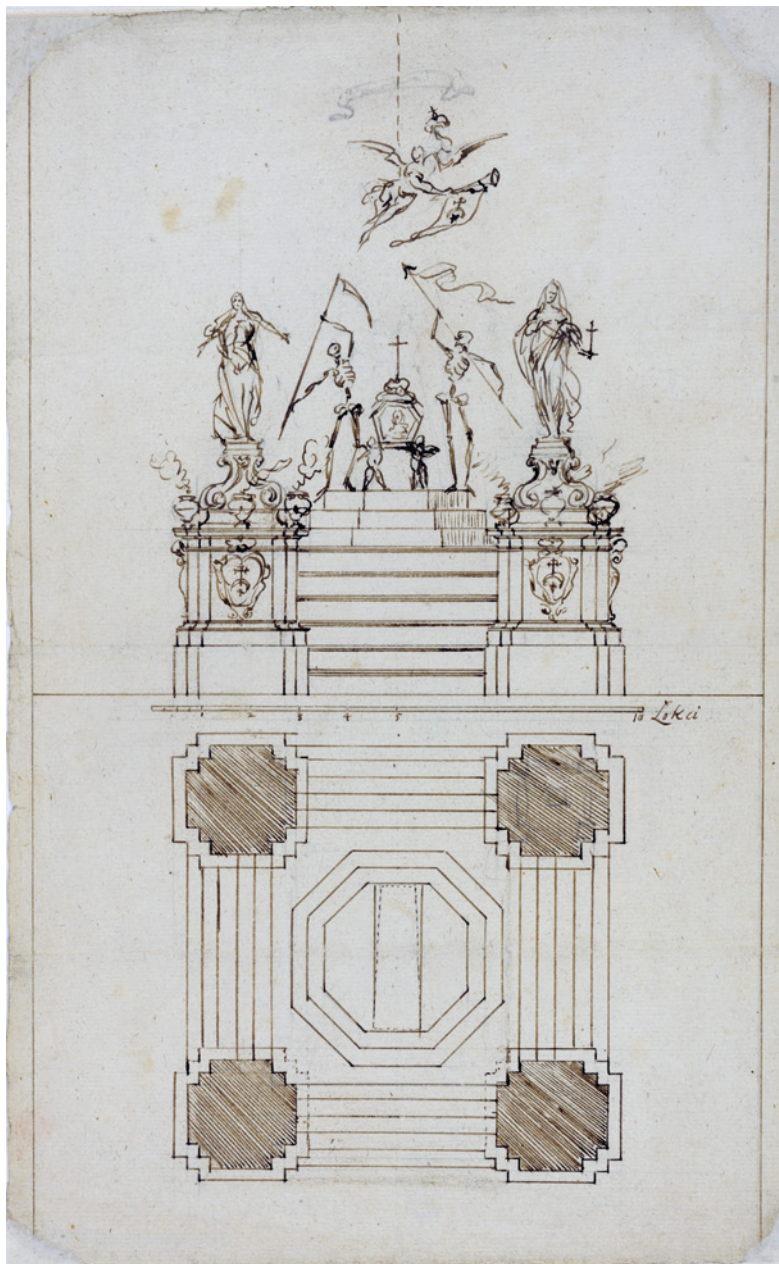


FIGURE 43 *Tylman van Gameren*, Design for the 'castrum doloris' of Gyzelda Wiśniowiecka, mother of King Michał Korybut, incorporating a coffin portrait of the deceased, 1672, *Tylman van Gameren Archive*, Print Room, University of Warsaw Library (inventory number: AT. 874).

PHOTOGRAPH: UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW LIBRARY

about his work: surviving funeral pamphlets describe his architectural projects while large figural sculptures for two of his funeral designs have survived.⁵¹ Among other prestigious commissions, Giżycki designed ephemeral decorations for the lavish four-day funeral of former *hetman* Prince Michał Serwacy Wiśniowiecki, held at the Church of the Discalced Carmelites in Wiśniowiec (now Vyshnivets in Ukraine) in 1745.⁵² The Prince's elaborate octagonal catafalque was positioned at the crossing of the nave and transepts. Its decoration included herms topped with busts of the Prince's first two wives, while a portrait of the deceased hung above the coffin.⁵³ Also incorporated were twelve skulls wearing the *szyszak* helmets typically worn by the *husaria* (heavy cavalry),⁵⁴ a cursory inclusion of indigenous military dress that adapted pan-European macabre motifs for a local context of reference. Similarly, Giżycki chose to allude to warfare in his *castrum doloris* design for the 1751 funeral of the wealthy *hetman* Józef Potocki at the Collegiate Church in Stanisławów (now Ivano-Frankivsk in Ukraine), from which three once-polychromed wooden figures of armoured military leaders survive (see Fig. 44).⁵⁵

Another significant visual feature of funerary ceremonial was the intricately-embroidered liturgical vestments provided by the church at which the funeral was held, which complemented the *memento mori* message seen in some specially-commissioned decorations. As was the case with such vestments in other European states,⁵⁶ those worn by priests in Poland-Lithuania were

51 See Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, vol. xvii, Kraków 1899, pp. 154–155; Andrzej Betlej, Paweł Giżycki SJ: *architekt polski XVIII wieku*, Kraków 2003.

52 Paweł Giżycki, *Relacya Apparencyi, y samego Aktu Pogrzebowego: ostatniego z domu S.P.J.O.Xiążęcia JMCI Wiśniowieckiego Michała Serwacego Korybuta*, Poczajów (now Pochaiv in Ukraine) 1745. Giżycki designed the illustrations for this pamphlet, which were engraved by Jakub Labringer from Lviv. Betlej, 2003, pp. 121–122.

53 Betlej, 2003, pp. 124–125.

54 Giżycki, 1745, p. F2 recto. Such skulls had also been a feature of the catafalque designed by Giżycki for Kazimierz Aleksander Pocię (wojewoda of Witebsk, now Vitsebsk in Belarus) at his funeral in the Franciscan church in Brześć Litewski (now Brest) in 1729. See Paweł Giżycki, *Excubiae Dolorum ad pretiosos cineres Ill. et Excell. Dni Casimiri Alexandri Pocię funebri apparatu*, Lviv 1730; Betlej, 2003, p. 211 and ill. 17.

55 For these rare sculptures, see Betlej, 2003, pp. 125–127; Bogdan Chaikovsky *et al.*, *no Rarities of Lviv History Museum*, Lviv 2003, pp. 134–135; Dziubkova, 1996, p. 285; Kalinowski, 1993, pp. 11. 12–16. For an account of Józef Potocki's four-day-long funeral, see Paweł Giżycki, *Dyariusz Czerodniowego Pogrzebu ś. p. Jmci Pana Józefa z Potoka na Stanisławowie, Brodach, Xięstwie Zbaraskim y Niemierowie Potockiego Kasztelana Krakowskiego Hetmana Wielkiego Koronnego w Stanisławowie w Kościele Kollegialnym*, Pochaiv 1751.

56 See Peter Jezler, *Himmel, Hölle, Fegefeuer. Das Jenseits im Mittelalter*, exhibition catalogue, Schweizerisches Landesmuseum 1994, Zurich 1994, pp. 184–185; Josef Riedmann, Julia



FIGURE 44 *Anonymous artist after design by Paweł Giżycki, Funerary sculpture of a military leader from the 'castrum doloris' of 'hetman' Józef Potocki, 1751, Lviv National Art Gallery collections, Olesko.*
PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

usually black and could be embroidered with moralising imagery, for example souls burning in purgatory, the Crucifixion or personifications of Death. In contrast to the majority of funerary decorations and ephemeral architecture, such vestments were costly and valued possessions and have survived in several religious institutions.

One of the earliest examples of Polish-Lithuanian funerary vestments, a black velvet chasuble dating to the second half of the seventeenth century, was commissioned by the Observant Franciscans in Poznań.⁵⁷ This silver and gold-embroidered vestment carries a didactic message comparable to that of the Dance of Death paintings that were frequently commissioned by this religious order (see Chapter 3). Depicting skulls wearing different headdresses to symbolise earthly status, including a papal tiara, a bishop's mitre, a cardinal's hat and a royal crown, the embroidered imagery demonstrates that all are equal in death. Particularly appropriate to a funerary context, these moralising skulls bear a close resemblance to those in the contemporaneous Augustinian Wheel of Death painting discussed in Chapter 2; like this Kraków canvas, it is possible that the decoration of the Poznań chasuble was influenced by printed imagery.

Full-length skeletons, requiring a high level of skill in composition and embroidery, were less frequently depicted on funerary vestments. Among the most accomplished examples to be produced in Poland-Lithuania is a seventeenth-century woollen chasuble now in the Lviv Museum of the History of Religion, the reverse side of which is resplendent with *memento mori* imagery (Fig. 45).⁵⁸ In the centre we see Christ's Cross surrounded by the *Arma Christi* (the Instruments of the Passion), below which is a large skull wearing a crown, a reminder of the passing of earthly wealth and status. Full-length skeletons holding scythes and standing on coffins are depicted either side of the Cross. They appear to stamp on the coffins beneath, demonstrating the

Hörmann and Ellen Hastaba, eds., *Eines Fürsten Traum*, exhibition catalogue, Schloss Tirol and Stift Stams 1995, Innsbruck 1995, pp. 556–557; Vít Vlnas, *Lumière et ténèbres. Art et civilisation du baroque en Bohême*, exhibition catalogue, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille 12 October 2002–2005 January 2003, Paris 2002, p. 99.

57 Now in the collections of the Archdiocesan Museum in Poznań, this is part of a set of vestments including a stole and maniple embroidered with crosses, and pall embroidered with a 'smiling' skull and crossbones motif. Mrozowski, 2000, p. 131; Dziubkova, 1996, p. 287; Dziubkova, 2004, p. 433.

58 This vestment has not been published previously. Almost identical is the decoration of a chasuble in the collections of the parish church at Górka Kościelnicza, to the north-east of Kraków. See Magdalena Adamska and Dariusz Nowacki, eds., *Amor mortis (o śmierci w kulturze dawnej Polski)*, exhibition catalogue, Muzeum Historii Katowic April–May 1989, Katowice 1989, cat. no. 75.



FIGURE 45 *Anonymous artist, Funeral chasuble depicting skeletons flanking the 'Arma Christi', 17th century, Lviv Museum of the History of Religion, Lviv.*
 PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

Triumph of Death, a theme already discussed in Chapter 2. Appropriate to a funerary context, above the skeletons are cartouches with quotations from the Latin Last Judgement hymn, *Dies irae* ('Day of Wrath').⁵⁹

Church decorations, as much as funerary processions, testify to the desire of the Polish-Lithuanian elites for lavish burials. Designs for temporary structures, especially *castrum doloris* architecture, place Polish-Lithuanian funerary ceremonial firmly within a European context, with foreign influences being transmitted through the circulation of printed imagery as well as the migration of foreign artists to the Commonwealth. Macabre imagery, especially skulls and skeletons, featured in privately-commissioned church decorations as well as ceremonial trappings such as liturgical vestments, which were provided by the religious institutions at which funerals were held. Foreign and royal prototypes were adapted, however, to suit new contexts and articulate the specific virtues and lineage of the deceased.

Coffin Portraits: Images of the Spiritual Body

An important and highly distinctive feature of Polish-Lithuanian funerals, and one worthy of particular consideration, was the *portret trumienny* (coffin portrait).⁶⁰ These commemorative bust likenesses represented the deceased with open eyes, as though alive. They were used as a focal point for the *castrum doloris* decoration and were painted specially for the funeral, sometimes directly from the corpse; for example, a noblewoman from Chlastawa near Poznań was depicted with a deathly blue pallor and sunken cheeks (Fig. 46).⁶¹

59 Ascribed to Franciscan poet Thomas of Celano (d. c. 1256), this forms the sequence of the Requiem Mass. Above the left skeleton are the words 'REDEMISTI CRUCEM PASSUS' ('Thou hast redeemed [by] suffering [on] the Cross'), while the following line is placed above the skeleton on the right: 'TANTUS LABOR NON SIT CASSUS' ('that this work may not be fruitless').

60 The main publications on coffin portraits are: Dziubkova, 1996; Joanna Dziubkova *et al.*, *Studia muzealne: Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu*, vol. XIX, Poznań 2000; Grażyna Michałak and Kamila Szymańska, eds., *'Pamiętka wieczna nigdy nie ustaje...': w kręgu leszczyńskiego portretu trumiennego*, exhibition catalogue, Muzeum Okręgowe w Lesznie December 2002–January 2003, Leszno 2002; Joanna Patarska, ed., *Portrety trumiennie, tablice inskrypcyjne i herbowe*, Międzyrzecz 1996. See also Mrozowski, 2000; Marek Rostworowski, ed., *Polaków portret własny*, 2 vols, Warsaw 1983 and 1986; Jerzy Malinowski, *Where East meets West: Portraits of Personages of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth 1576–1763*, exhibition catalogue, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie 1993, Warsaw 1993.

61 See Dziubkova, 1996, p. 193; Mrozowski, 2000, p. 209; Patarska, 1996, pp. 44 and 115.



FIGURE 46 *Anonymous artist, Coffin portrait of a noblewoman from Chlastawa, third ¼ of 17th century, Muzeum, Międzyrzecz.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ZE ZBIORÓW MUZEUM ZIEMI MIĘDZYRZECKIEJ IM.
ALFA KOWALSKIEGO

While memorial portraits of the deceased sometimes formed part of funerary decorations in other European states,⁶² in Poland-Lithuania a distinct and particularly widespread version of this tradition emerged in which the portrait became closely linked to the coffin itself; these so-called 'coffin portraits' were either hung above the coffin or attached at the foot of the coffin during the ceremony, where they would face the congregation (see Fig. 43). Complementing

62 For example, the opulent catafalque erected in the church of San Lorenzo in Lucina in Rome to mark the death of King James II of Great Britain (d. 1701) had a bust portrait as its focal point. See Werner Oechslin and Anja Buschow, *Festarchitektur. Der Architekt als Inszenierungskünstler*, Stuttgart 1984, pp. 100 and 103; Popelka, 1994, pp. 126 and 185.

this, an epitaph would be placed at the head of the coffin and heraldic shields attached along the sides to prove the noble lineage of the deceased on both the maternal and paternal sides.⁶³ After the funeral, coffin portraits and their corresponding heraldic shields could be displayed in perpetuity in the church where the family of the deceased once worshipped, as a lasting memorial. Consequently, certain churches began to resemble portrait galleries of the local elite.

In contrast to most temporary funerary architecture, a large number of coffin portraits have been preserved; for example, the most ambitious exhibition of such artworks to date, held at the National Museum in Poznań in 1996, included over 300 *szlachta* and burgher coffin portraits and related artefacts from present-day Poland and Ukraine alone (Fig. 47).⁶⁴ The content of the Poznań exhibition, however, represents only a selection of surviving examples from the Commonwealth, not to mention the many coffin portraits that are mentioned in wills and funeral pamphlets but do not survive. The trend for these commemorative artworks within Poland-Lithuania was far-reaching. It was found in cities as distant as Poznań and Lviv – among Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic communities – and was espoused by the *szlachta* as well as affluent burghers.⁶⁵ While this widespread funerary fashion began in earnest in the mid-seventeenth century and declined in popularity by the late eighteenth century, the roots of the coffin portrait can be traced to royal ceremonial of the sixteenth century. One of the earliest written records of such a portrait comes from Georg Osterberger's description of the Kraków funeral procession for King Stefan Batory during which the 'corpse...lay in a fine pewter coffin with

63 In addition, a funeral banner, usually featuring a full-length portrait of the individual at prayer, could be hung over the coffin. See Irma Kozina and Jan K. Ostrowski, 'Chorągwie nagrobne', in Jerzy Baranowski *et al.*, *Sarmatia semper viva: zbiór studiów ofiarowany przez przyjaciół prof. drowi hab. Tadeuszowi Chrzanowskiemu*, Warsaw 1993, pp. 91–138; Andrzej Rzempełuch, 'O chorągwiach nagrobnych w Prusach Książęcych', in Dziubkova 2000, pp. 134–155. For examples of such artwork, see Mrozowski, 2000, pp. 144, 190–191 and 199; Dziubkova, 1996, pp. 272–274.

64 Entitled *Vanitas*, the exhibition was also accompanied by an extensive catalogue. See Dziubkova, 1996.

65 Coffin portraits created for Protestant patrons include those of members of Leszno's community of Bohemian Brethren. See Dziubkova, 1996, pp. 75–76. Examples from Orthodox communities include a portrait previously in the collections of the Orthodox Church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Lviv, thought to be of the ennobled Greek merchant Jerzy Papara. See *Ibid.*, pp. 127–128. Examples of burgher coffin portrait commissions include a portrait of merchant Andrzej Mogilnicki, now in the Museum in Łowicz. See *Ibid.*, pp. 119–120.



FIGURE 47 Various artists, A selection of 'szlachta' and burgher coffin portraits, *Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu, Poznań*.

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

the late King Stefan's likeness'.⁶⁶ It is generally acknowledged that the Silesian-born painter Marcin Kober (c. 1550–1598),⁶⁷ who was active in Breslau (now Wrocław) and Prague as well as at the Polish-Lithuanian royal court, was involved in the execution of Stefan Batory's coffin portrait.⁶⁸

The majority of coffin portrait artists are anonymous, however, since little-known practitioners were frequently commissioned to produce likenesses of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility and burghers. For example, a posthumous inventory of 1684 relating to the estate of Anastazja Witkowska, a member of Vilnius's Orthodox burgher community, records that the task of 'preparing' a portrait to

66 See Georg Osterberger, 'A brief description of the ceremonies and procession held for the burial of His late Royal Majesty Stefan, King of Poland, of most praiseworthy memory', in Mulryne, 2004, p. 411. There is no definitive evidence of earlier coffin portraits, although an octagonal copper likeness of King Zygmunt II August in the collections of the National Museum in Kraków may have been used to commemorate the death of this earlier monarch. Połujan, 2002, p. 102.

67 Stanisław Herbst, 'Kober (Köber, Koeger, Cober, Khober) Mikołaj Marcin', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XIII, 1967–1968, pp. 143–144.

68 Stefan Batory's sarcophagus is now in the crypt of Kraków's Wawel Cathedral. For the portrait, see Piwocka and Nowacki, 2000, pp. 195–196.

place at the head of her coffin had been delegated simply 'to the hospital' rather than a specific artist, implying that such charitable religious institutions could oversee the production of funerary artworks (perhaps especially in cases where this was done directly from the corpse).⁶⁹ The varied quality of these likenesses indicates marked variations in affluence even within elite groups. Since coffin portraits could be executed on a range of metals such as tin, copper and lead, with little need for grounding, they ranged from the relatively affordable – potentially costing less than one percent of the overall funeral costs, as was the case with Anastazja Witkowska's portrait⁷⁰ – to the lavish. Extravagant examples include a skilfully-executed coffin portrait on silver depicting Piotr Adam Opaliński (1636–1682)⁷¹ of Sieraków, a well-travelled magnate who had been educated in Vienna and Paris, which is discussed in the case study below (see Fig. 51). Yet, despite their differing artistic merit, most such artworks share distinct formal features. They are often polygonal, either hexagonal or octagonal, although oval examples are also found and, as with Stefan Batory's likeness, the face is generally shown in three-quarter profile and the top part of the shoulders is included, providing a glimpse of the individual's costume.

Distinct types of dress recur in coffin portraits, often reflecting Polish-Lithuanian noble or burgher fashions. During the seventeenth century especially, noblemen were usually depicted wearing traditional dress, consisting of a *delia* over a *żupan*, or sometimes armour, complemented by a suitably distinctive hairstyle with the hair shaved back. This costume was an intrinsic element of *szlachta* identity and a conscious display of status and patriotic allegiance. Women of noble or burgher descent, meanwhile, were generally shown wearing Western European styles, reflecting the influence of foreign trends in female fashions. By the eighteenth century, female portraits frequently incorporate elaborate garments, with few examples of penitent simplicity. Regarded as a mark of status, the dresses are often colourful with exquisite lace embroidery and even low-cut necklines, and many women were portrayed wearing a string of pearls; this symbol of purity also served to indicate their social standing.

69 See Frick, 2013, p. 382. Hospitals in seventeenth-century Vilnius cared for the poor as well as the ill and were usually attached to religious institutions. For these hospitals, see *Ibid.*, pp. 327–331.

70 The posthumous inventory for Anastazja Witkowska indicates that the portrait accounted for only 3 *złoty* of the total 409 *złoty*, 6 *groszy* spent on her funeral. See Frick, 2013, pp. 382–383. The choice of metal as a base for painting was rarely seen in Europe, except in small cabinet paintings, and in the later tradition of German *ex voto* images. For these, see Lenz Kriss-Rettenbeck, *Ex voto. Zeichen Bild und Abbild im christlichen Votivbrauchtum*, Zurich 1972.

71 Włodzimierz Dworzaczek, 'Opaliński Piotr Adam h. Łódzia', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, xxiv, 1979, pp. 104–105.

Female head coverings are the most distinctive element of coffin portraits and are also frequently imbued with symbolic meaning. Married women could be depicted wearing fur hats, as in the abovementioned portrait of a noblewoman from Chlastawa. Not seen in ordinary portraiture, such hats were intended for travelling, and alluded to the journey from the mortal world to heaven. Girls who died young, meanwhile, were occasionally depicted with a Roman-style wreath as a symbol of virginity, in line with the instructions of the Office of the Dead.⁷²

In addition to elaborate clothing, a degree of idealisation may sometimes be detected in the age at which the deceased were presented. Some were shown younger than the age at which they died, while artificial ageing was often introduced in the case of children: for instance, two-year-old Barbara Bronikowska's portrait in the collections of the museum in Międzyrzecz in western Poland shows her with the facial features, hairstyle and dress of a young lady (Fig. 48). This 'optimisation' of age can be interpreted as an attempt to achieve a sense of timelessness in anticipation of the general resurrection at the Last Judgement. Indeed, the Latin epitaph on the reverse of the coffin portrait of this member of a Protestant *szlachta* family states that she was laid in her coffin in order to rise from the dead.⁷³

Coffin portraits, therefore, often sought to represent the timeless (or 'spiritual') body that was to rise at the general resurrection at the Last Judgement, as opposed to the 'natural' body which was to be buried in the coffin. This notion of the natural and spiritual bodies is drawn from St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians: 'It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body' (I. Corinthians 15. 42–44). Ernst Kantorowicz in his influential study of medieval political theology, *The King's Two Bodies*, suggested that this Christian concept of duality was reworked in medieval kingship, arguing that the office of the medieval king was understood as combining the 'Body natural', the transient earthly body, and the 'Body politic', the imperishable office of king that ensures the continual existence of a ruler.⁷⁴ Attitudes to the body at Polish-Lithuanian funerals can be compared to this interpretation of medieval kingship: just as medieval funerals promoted the enduring presence of a monarch, so the Polish-Lithuanian elites sought to preserve the continuity of their lineage with visual allusions to their spiritual body.

72 One example is the coffin portrait of Anna Eleonora Mielecka who died in 1679 at the age of three. See Dziubkova, 1996, pp. 245 and 114–115. It is stated in the Office of the Dead that children 'in token of their Integrity and Virginity, should have a Crown of Flowers and sweet Herbs put on their Heads' at their funeral. Catholic Church, *The Office for the Dead: According to the Roman Breviary, Missal and Ritual*, London 1748, p. 178.

73 Dziubkova, 1996, p. 56; Mrozowski, 2000, p. 205; Patorska, 1996, pp. 23 and 72.

74 Kantorowicz, 1997, p. 13.



FIGURE 48 *Anonymous artist, Coffin portrait of two-year-old Barbara Bronikowska, a Protestant, c. 1671, Muzeum, Międzyrzecz.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ZE ZBIORÓW MUZEUM ZIEMI MIĘDZYRZECKIEJ IM.
ALFA KOWALSKIEGO

The unusual octagonal format of many coffin portraits (and some catafalques), such as that of the abovementioned noblewoman from Chlastawa, emphasises this preoccupation with spiritual rebirth.⁷⁵ St Gregory the Great, among others, drew attention to the numerological symbolism of the number eight, stating that it 'denotes the day of eternal judgement and the resurrection of the flesh'; these ideas were widely known, having been incorporated into the Golden Legend.⁷⁶ Consequently, the octagonal format has a long association with baptisteries and fonts and, just as these were associated with spiritual rebirth,⁷⁷ so the eight-sided *portret trumienny* alluded to the eternal life of the spiritual body once the natural body had perished.

Distinctive in their untypical format and symbolic allusions, coffin portraits were largely unique to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Nevertheless, comparable artworks can occasionally be identified in other areas of Europe, for example the portraits on the sarcophagi of the Württemberg dynasty. In particular, the full-length depiction of Duchess Sibylla of Württemberg (d. 1707) on her tin sarcophagus in the crypt of the Stiftskirche in Stuttgart is painted upon an hexagonal piece of metal and idealises the age of the deceased, depicting the eighty-seven-year-old as a young woman.⁷⁸ Yet, the closest formal similarities to the Polish-Lithuanian coffin portrait tradition can be found

75 Octagonal portraits were sometimes intended to fit onto the hexagonal side of a coffin, as seen in a sketch by Gislén presumed to be for the *castrum doloris* of Krzysztof Korwin Gosiewski (c. 1643). See Chrościcki, 1974, p. 150; Dziubkova, 2000, 176–177; Wiliński, 1958, illustration 3. Examples of octagonal catafalques include one of Tylman van Gameren's designs for the funeral of Gryzelda Wiśniowiecka (Fig. 43; AT. 874) and Paweł Giżycki's *castrum doloris* design for the funeral of Michał Serwacy Wiśniowiecki, discussed above.

76 Quotation from Homily 8 of Book 2 of the commentary on the Book of Ezekiel. See Gregory the Great, *The Homilies of St Gregory the Great. On the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, tr. Theodosia Gray, Etna 1990, p. 247. The words of St Gregory referred to in the Golden Legend are: 'Christ...rose from death on Sunday...after death we find rest for our soul, and on Sunday, the eighth day, we rise from that condition with the body and rejoice in the glory of soul and body'. See Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 1, Princeton 1993, p. 217.

77 An early example is the baptistery of San Giovanni alle Fonti in Milan (better known as the Ambrosian Baptistery), thought to have been built in the fourth century, which had an octagonal plan as well as an octagonal font. For such early baptisteries, see Anita Stauffer, *On Baptismal Fonts: Ancient and Modern*, Nottingham 1994, pp. 22–23. For the link between octagonal baptisteries and mausolea, see Richard Krautheimer, 'Introduction to an "Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, v, 1942, pp. 20–33. See also John Gordon Davies, *The Architectural Setting of Baptism*, London 1962.

78 See Harald Schukraft, *Die Grablegen des Hauses Württemberg*, Stuttgart 1989. Stanisław Wiliński also compared an octagonal memorial portrait of the Godtzen family (1660) in

in the probably unconnected practice of mummy portraiture in Roman Egypt. Known as 'Fayum portraits', these naturalistic, wide-eyed bust depictions of the deceased, discovered in the Fayum district in Upper Egypt, were either painted onto or attached to the head of the mummy. While mummy portraits produced in Roman Egypt only became known to Europeans in the seventeenth century,⁷⁹ it is possible that written accounts describing the use of masks or *imagines* to recall the appearance of the deceased at Ancient Roman funerals served as an inspiration for coffin portraits.⁸⁰ Such indirect parallels aside, however, there is little doubt that the *portret trumienny* developed almost exclusively within the boundaries of the Commonwealth, and its overlapping with the heraldry and symbolic importance of the *szlachta* meant that it was an artistic tradition that communicated exclusively within that setting.

The largely indigenous Polish-Lithuanian tradition of the *portret trumienny*, then, first seen in sixteenth-century royal funerary ceremonial and later adopted by the *szlachta* and others more broadly, provided a contrast with the natural body in the coffin, representing instead the spiritual body that would be resurrected at the Last Judgement. Portrayed in their eternal, living state, the dead were able to participate in their own funerals; and, once the burial had taken place, the coffin portrait could be redisplayed in the church where their family worshipped and so would take on the role of a funerary monument. Being thus commemorated, the deceased took part in a perpetual adoration, 'attending' not just their own funerals but every mass alongside their kin. Their *post mortem* piety helped to ensure their salvation whilst also maintaining a visible sense of dynastic continuity.

Commemoration in Context: The Burials of the Opaliński Magnate Family

A more focused assessment of the distinctive elements of Polish-Lithuanian funerary culture and how they linked together in reality can be gained by concentrating on one magnate family: the Opalińskis, a wealthy dynasty who were prominent landowners in Great Poland and took a leading role in

Norway to the Polish-Lithuanian coffin portrait tradition. See Stanisław Wiliński, 'Wielkopolski portret trumienny', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki i Kultury*, XI, no. 3/4, 1949, p. 274.

79 Susan Walker and Morris Bierbrier, *Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt*, London 1997, p. 23. See also Euphrosyne Doxiadis, *The Mysterious Fayum Portraits: Faces from Ancient Egypt*, London 1996.

80 See Hope, 2007, pp. 122–126.

local governance. Piotr Opaliński (1586–1624)⁸¹ rebuilt the castle in the town of Sieraków, north-west of Poznań, which became the family seat from 1590 until 1749. Both Piotr and his son Krzysztof (1609–1655)⁸² held the rank of *wojewoda* of Poznań, and Piotr acted as an envoy at the Sejm (Parliament or Diet). As well as being statesmen, the Opalińskis were actively involved in military campaigns, as was traditionally expected of their estate, although Krzysztof is best remembered for tactically surrendering his province during the 1655 Swedish invasion in the hope that King Charles x Gustav would prove a more successful ruler than King Jan 11 Kazimierz. Krzysztof's disillusionment with the existing governance of the Commonwealth, such as its decentralisation and lack of a standing army, had been expressed in his widely-read satires.⁸³ Given the dynasty's stature and influence, it is not surprising that a particularly wide range of sources survives for the burials of the Opalińskis in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including funeral sermons, contracts for artistic commissions, elaborate metal sarcophagi, coffin portraits and lavish funerary monuments to the deceased. Drawing upon such diverse sources, this section considers the obsequies of the Opaliński family within the wider context of burial practice in Poland-Lithuania, building upon the analysis of funerary ceremonial and artwork made earlier in this chapter. In particular, it will show that the burials of this magnate dynasty demonstrate the prominence of heraldic and patriotic allusions during Polish-Lithuanian burials.

As wealthy Catholics, the Opalińskis were generous patrons of the Observant Franciscans and chose to create their funerary chapel in the north transept of this mendicant order's church in Sieraków (1624–1639), an ambitious architectural project for which they employed Italian architect Cristoforo Bonadura (c.1582 – c.1670).⁸⁴ Piotr Opaliński, whose enormous black marble funerary monument by sculptor Sebastian Sala (1618–1652), showing the deceased kneeling before the Cross, dominates the chapel (Fig. 49), received a Jesuit schooling and so would have been acutely aware of the doctrine of purgatory and the importance of preparing for death.⁸⁵ In 1983 a crypt was discovered below the chapel

81 Włodzimierz Dworzaczek, 'Opaliński Piotr z Bnina h. Łódzia', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XXIV, 1979, pp. 101–102.

82 Alojzy Sajkowski, 'Opaliński Krzysztof z Bnina h. Łódzia', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XXIV, 1979, pp. 87–90.

83 Krzysztof Opaliński, *Satyry, albo przestrogi do naprawy rządu y obyczajów w Polsce należące*, Kraków 1652. For Krzysztof Opaliński and his satires see also Kate Wilson, 'The Politics of Toleration Among the Szlachta of Great Poland: Rafał Leszczyński (1579–1636) and Krzysztof Opaliński (1609–1655)', *Słowo*, XIV, 2002, pp. 134–156.

84 See Adam Miłobędzki, *Architektura polska XVII wieku*, vol. 1, Warsaw 1980, pp. 268–277.

85 For Sala's memorial to Piotr Opaliński, see Mrozowski, 2000, pp. 73–74.



FIGURE 49 *Sebastian Sala, Piotr Opaliński's funerary monument, 1641–1648, former Observant Franciscan Church, Sieraków.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

of the Opaliński dynasty, where a rare group of five ornate metal sarcophagi had been preserved, three of which featured coffin portraits.⁸⁶ The sarcophagi held the remains of three generations of Opalińskis: those of Piotr and his wife Zofia (d. 1639); their son, Krzysztof; and Krzysztof's two sons, Piotr Adam (1636–1682) and Jan Karol (1642–1695).⁸⁷ Now displayed together in a purpose-built mausoleum at the Opaliński Castle Museum in Sieraków, following extensive conservation, the sarcophagi provide valuable information about how the Polish-Lithuanian elites chose to remember their dead.⁸⁸

The complex ornamental scheme of the oldest sarcophagus, that of Piotr Opaliński, emphasises the heroic virtues of the deceased by incorporating medallions showing the Roman heroes Horatius Cocles, Mutius Scaevola and Marcus Curtius. As art historian Katarzyna Kolendo has shown, these heroes were likely chosen because they represent the Roman Republic, to which the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (or *Rzeczpospolita*) considered itself heir.⁸⁹ It is perhaps ironic that Piotr's coffin makes such allusions, given his son Krzysztof's later criticisms of Poland's decentralised government. Piotr's own heroic achievements included fighting against the Ottomans, as commemorated in a medallion depicting military panoplies, a Roman-inspired motif. Since Piotr was actively involved in politics, a further medallion on his sarcophagus shows an audience with the king in which a senator is about to be struck by a boulder held by an eagle, guided by a skeletal figure of Death (Fig. 50).

Piotr's sarcophagus was cast in tin and lead alloy by Jakub Kanadej, a skilled Poznań metalworker, whose contract, outlining the proposed iconography of

86 It is unusual to find metal sarcophagi that also incorporate coffin portraits. Another comparable example, executed by Jakub Kanadej, is the sarcophagus of Adam Sędziwój Czarnkowski (1555–1627), *starosta* of Great Poland, at the parish church in Czarnków. See Joanna Eckhardt, 'Sarkofag cynowy Adama Sędziwoja Czarnkowskiego, dzieło konwisarstwa poznańskiego', *Studia Renesansowe*, 1, 1956, pp. 332–358; Teresa Ruszczyńska and Aniela Sławska, eds., 'Województwo poznańskie: powiat czarnkowski', *Katalog Zabytków Sztuki w Polsce*, v, no. 2, 1966, p. 6; Dziubkova, 1996, p. 46–48.

87 Włodzimierz Dworzaczek, 'Opaliński Jan Karol h. Łódzia', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, xxiv, 1979, p. 85.

88 For the Sieraków sarcophagi, see Joanna Dziubkova, 'Vanitas. Sierakowski epizod rodu Opalińskich', *Nurt*, xi (219), November 1983, pp. 1–4; Janusz Krause, Maria Rudy and Michał Woźniak, *Sarkofagi rodu Opalińskich: Sieraków*, Toruń 1995. For a broader study of Polish metal sarcophagi, see Janusz Krause, *Sarkofagi cynowe: problematyka technologiczna, warsztatowa i konserwatorska*, Toruń 1995; Jerzy T. Petrus, 'Uwagi o najstarszych portretach trumiennych w Polsce', in Dziubkova 2000, pp. 80–91.

89 Katarzyna Kolendo, 'A Polish *Vir Romanus*. The Iconographical Programme of the Tin Sarcophagus of Piotr Opaliński (1624)', in Urszula Szulakowska ed., *Power and Persuasion: Sculpture in its Rhetorical Context*, Warsaw 2004, p. 22.



FIGURE 50 *Jakub Kanadej*, Death aims to strike down a senator with a boulder held by an eagle, 1624, *sarcophagus of Piotr Opaliński* (detail), *Muzeum Zamek Opalińskich w Sierakowie, Sieraków*.
PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

this artwork in detail, has survived.⁹⁰ Kanadej also executed Zofia Opalińska's tin and lead alloy sarcophagus, although this was more plainly decorated with medallions containing coats of arms. The three remaining sarcophagi (those of Krzysztof and his sons Piotr Adam and Jan Karol) are decorated in the Baroque style, with coffin portraits at the head. In the crypt, these portraits were turned to face anyone who entered, as though the dead were guarding their burial place. These three Baroque sarcophagi merit further analysis, especially in relation to the surviving funeral sermons of the Opaliński family.

90 Now in the Poznań State Archives (Akta miasta Poznania, I 36, 195–196 [200–201]), the contract was not fully adhered to in the final decorative programme. See Kolendo, 2004, p. 21. See also Katarzyna Kolendo, 'Polski Horatius Cocles, Mucius Scaevola i Marcus Curtius. O ikonografii sarkofagu Piotra Opalińskiego z kościoła w Sierakowie', *Meander*, LIII, no. 4, 1998, p. 405. For Jakub Kanadej, see Krause, Rudy and Woźniak, 1995, pp. 25–27.

Particularly interesting in terms of iconography is the earliest Baroque-style sarcophagus, that of Krzysztof Opaliński (Fig. 51).⁹¹ Produced by an unknown workshop, this simple copper coffin, unlike the others, relies solely upon painted decoration for its visual impact. A crude portrait of the bearded Krzysztof can be found within a cartouche at its head, while a matching cartouche with a textual epitaph decorates the opposite end; in addition, a painting of the Crucifixion with Our Lady of Sorrows adorns the lid, while the sloping sides show the coats of arms of the deceased and his family. Four cartouches incorporating allegorical images of saints, decorating the long sides of Krzysztof's sarcophagus, deserve particular attention. Three of these are patron saints of the Opaliński family: St Christopher, the patron saint of the deceased (Fig. 52); St Peter, the patron saint of the father of the deceased; and St Teresa of Avila, the patron saint of the wife of the deceased. Each saint is depicted sitting in a boat, since this is the heraldic symbol of the Opaliński family, whose *herb*, Łodzia, translates as 'boat'. The Opalińskis were keen to exploit the classical as well as Christian symbolism of the boat. According to Greek mythology, Charon ferried the souls of those who had been given proper burial across the River Styx to Hades while, in Christianity, faith and the Church are often compared to a boat in which the Christian can escape stormy waters.

Sermons in three surviving funeral pamphlets of the Opaliński family⁹² use the imagery of the boat to describe the transportation of the soul to heaven, just as the depiction of patron saints in boats upon Krzysztof's sarcophagus demonstrates how they help the deceased on this final journey. At Piotr Opaliński's funeral in 1624, for example, the metaphor of the boat enabled the priest to draw attention to the heroic and patriotic virtues of the Opalińskis:

⁹¹ For this sarcophagus, see *Ibid.*, pp. 35–36.

⁹² Felicjan Turski, *Kazanie na pogrzebie przezacney pamięci, Iasnie Wielmoznego Pana, Iego Mosci Pana, P. Piotra ze Bnina Opalinskiego, wojewody poznańskiego*, Poznań 1624; Mattheusz Bembus, *Załoba abo kazanie, ktore ná pogrzebie sławney pámieci niebosczyká Iego M.X. Andrzeia ze Bniná Opalinskiego, Biskupa Poznańskiego*, Kraków 1624; Samuel Baszkowski, *Bieg zycia ludzkiego w herbowney lodzi Iasnie Wielmożnych Panow I.P.P. Opalenskich przy pogrzebie Wielmoznego Pana I.M.P. Iana Leopolda z Bnina Opalenskiego Kasztelana Nakielskiego*, Kalisz 1673. For Felicjan Turski, a Franciscan, see Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, vol. XXXI, Kraków 1936, p. 415. For Mattheusz (Matheus) Bembus, a Jesuit, see Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, vol. XII, Kraków 1891, pp. 456–461. For Samuel Baszkowski, an Observant Franciscan, see Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, vol. XII, Kraków 1891, pp. 404–405.



FIGURE 51 *Anonymous artists, Sarcophagi of Krzysztof Opaliński (foreground) and Piotr Adam Opaliński (background), 1655 and 1682, Muzeum Zamek Opalińskich w Sierakowie, Sieraków.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES



FIGURE 52 *Anonymous artist, St Christopher, sarcophagus of Krzysztof Opaliński (detail), 1655, Muzeum Zamek Opalińskich w Sierakowie, Sieraków.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

The Opaliński's boat enjoys fame across the Kingdom,
 Since in it sail wisdom, courage, and love of the Fatherland.
 The Opaliński's boat, the Fatherland's precious jewel
 Rich in virtue and honour, sails to heaven.⁹³

Nearly half a century later, at the funeral of Piotr's nephew Jan Leopold in 1673, the boat was employed in a poetic metaphor describing the passage of the deceased to heaven. Here, the mourners listened to the first-person voice of Jan Leopold describing the experience of dying and entering heaven. In contrast with the previous extract, in this poem the term 'Fatherland' becomes synonymous with heaven:

I toyed with trade, my goods in a fragile boat
 Sailing to the Fatherland through various floods.
 The goods were the soul, the sea the world, the boat the body,
 Death the port, and the Fatherland heaven.
 I have moored now at the port, with my goods intact
 I bid farewell to the sea, with joy I welcome the Fatherland.⁹⁴

The heraldic image of the Łódzia boat arriving at its heavenly port also informed the textual epitaph of the copper sarcophagus of Piotr Adam Opaliński.⁹⁵ As with Krzysztof Opaliński's coffin, this epitaph is placed at the foot of the sarcophagus, with the portrait at the head, both of which are lavishly executed on silver. Painted by a skilled artist, the portrait of Piotr Adam in three-quarter view stares at the onlooker with a piercing gaze (Fig. 51). The workmanship of the sarcophagus is of the highest quality, the decoration consisting of foliate *repoussé* ornament and heraldic symbols.

The final Opaliński sarcophagus, that of Piotr Adam's brother, Jan Karol, was cast in tin and lead alloy, with female herms decorating its corners and long

93 'Łódź Opalińskich, sławą po Koronie słynie,/ Bo w niej mądrość, męstwo, miłość Ojczyzny płynie./ Łódź Opalińskich, wielka Ojczyzny ozdoba/ W cnotę, y w godność bogata, płynie do niebá'. See Turski, 1624, p. A1 verso.

94 'Kupiectwem się bawiłem, towar w słabej łodzi/ Prowadząc do Ojczyzny przez różne powodzi./ Towarem Dusza, morzem świat, á Łódka Ciało,/ Śmierć portem á Ojczyzna Niebo mi bywało./ Stanałem już u portu, z towaru całością/ Zegnam Cię Morze, witam Ojczyznę z radością'. See Baszkowski, 1673, p. B2 recto.

95 For the transcription of the Latin epitaph and a Polish translation, see Krause, Rudy and Woźniak, 1995, pp. 36–37. For additional boat imagery in funeral sermons of the Opaliński family, see also Bembus, 1624, pp. Biii verso and Ci recto; Baszkowski, 1673, pp. A4 recto-A4 verso and C2 verso-C3 recto.

sides, interspersed with coats of arms.⁹⁶ The portrait is the main decorative element, painted directly onto the sarcophagus, showing the deceased wearing an ivory *żupan* and red fur-lined cloak (Fig. 53). Although he lived to a similar age as his father and brother, Jan Karol Opaliński looks significantly older in this likeness, particularly in comparison to the depiction of Piotr Adam. This may indicate reliance upon existing depictions as models for the coffin portraits of Krzysztof and Piotr Adam Opaliński.

A further Opaliński family portrait displayed in the Sieraków church is of particular interest, especially when considered alongside the aforementioned coffin portraits. Depicting Krzysztof Opaliński laid out on a bier, this is a rare Polish-Lithuanian example of a so-called 'catafalque portrait'. Such *post mortem* depictions show the body as it was displayed to mourners prior to the funeral, frequently surrounded by candles. In many European states, including Britain and France, painted and engraved catafalque portraits were popular, as were related modes of portraiture, such as depictions of the deceased on their death-bed.⁹⁷ It is thought that the inspiration for the few existing



FIGURE 53 *Anonymous artist, Sarcophagus of Jan Karol Opaliński, 1695, Muzeum Zamek Opalińskich w Sierakowie, Sieraków.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

96 For this sarcophagus, see Krause, Rudy and Woźniak, 1995, p. 38.

97 For such portraits in Europe, see Andor Pigler, 'Portraying the Dead', *Acta Historiae Artium Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, IV, nos. 1–2, 1956, pp. 1–75.

Polish-Lithuanian examples of such portraits⁹⁸ came from Hungary, where a number of elaborate works of this type can be found.⁹⁹ For example, the intricate portrait of Count Gáspár Illésházy (d. 1648) at the National Museum of Hungary in Budapest shows the deceased lying on a catafalque draped in a richly woven tapestry; the embroidery and lacework on the pillow, clothing and baldachin are rendered in minute detail to give the appearance of great splendour.¹⁰⁰ Although they were not re-used in funerary monuments, catafalque portraits could be hung in the church where they acted as a vivid memorial to the deceased.

Krzysztof Opaliński's catafalque portrait, which still hangs on the northern nave wall at Sieraków church, depicts the dead *wojewoda* with a cross around his neck and holding a rosary, wearing deep red and lying on a catafalque draped in red cloth.¹⁰¹ Likely influenced by the circulation of printed images, such as an etching of 1632 by Gdańsk-based printmaker Filip Jansz¹⁰² showing King Zygmunt III of the Vasa dynasty on the bed of state at the Royal Castle in Warsaw (Fig. 54),¹⁰³ it includes the typical features of catafalque portraits, such as large candles surrounding the deceased, although the candlesticks are personalised here to incorporate the *herb* of Łódzia. The physical resemblance to Krzysztof's coffin portrait is also evident in the characteristic long nose and black beard and moustache, although the eyes in the catafalque portrait are closed to indicate that the natural body has perished.

Surviving evidence of the Opaliński family's commemorative practices demonstrates this magnate dynasty's desire to articulate their pedigree through the visual culture of death. In addition to copying prototypes from Polish-Lithuanian royalty, which themselves drew upon pan-European traditions, the

98 The earliest surviving Polish-Lithuanian catafalque portrait is that of Mother Beata Konstancja of St Joseph (d. 1627), painted for the former Discalced Carmelite nunnery in Kraków, which she had established. See Śnieżyńska-Stolot, 1977, p. 114; Dziubkova, 1996, p. 277.

99 Mrozowski, 2000, p. 148. See also Enikő D. Buzási, '17th Century Catafalque Paintings in Hungary', *Acta Historiae Artium*, XXI, 1975, pp. 112–119; Enikő D. Buzási, 'Ungarische Totenbildnisse des 17. Jahrhunderts. (Zur Frage des geistigen Hintergrundes des Manierismus in Ungarn.)', in Ewa Zawadzka ed., *Seminaria Niedzickie. Portret typu sarmackiego w wieku XVII w Polsce, Czechach, na Słowacji i na Węgrzech*, Kraków 1985, pp. 177–182; Śnieżyńska-Stolot, 1977, pp. 113–116.

100 See Buzási, 1975, p. 115; Buzási, 1985, pp. 178–179; Ágnes Körber, *Hungarian Art*, tr. Judith Sollosy, Budapest 1999, pp. 142–143.

101 See Mrozowski, 2000, p. 148; Dziubkova, 1996, p. 277.

102 See Paweł Groth, 'Jansz Filip', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, x, 1962–1964, p. 577.

103 For the etching, see Mrozowski, 2000, p. 145.

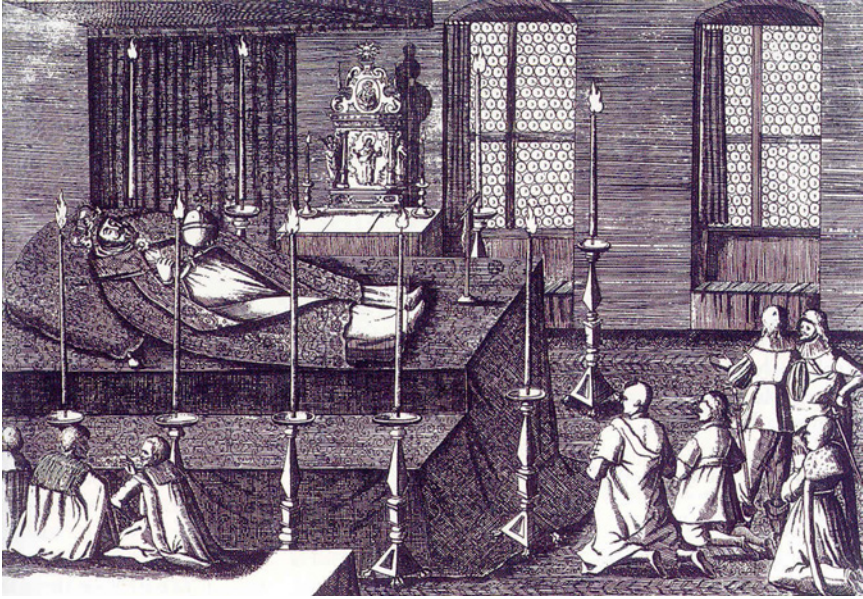


FIGURE 54 *Filip Jansz*, King Zygmunt III on the bed of state at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, 1632.
 PHOTOGRAPH: POLSKA AKADEMIA NAUK BIBLIOTEKA GDAŃSKA, GDAŃSK

powerful Opalińskis also personalised their funerals by commissioning coffin portraits and maintaining a consistent emphasis upon familial heraldry. Not only are there numerous depictions of the family's Łódzia coat of arms in their commemorative artwork, but the metaphor of the Łódzia boat can be found repeatedly in published funeral sermons. This overt emphasis on dynastic continuity beyond the grave, clearly articulated in this case study but applicable across the *szlachta* more generally, was a vital and consistent component of Polish-Lithuanian funerary ceremonial.

Conclusion

This chapter has identified a widespread transformation in the visual culture of commemoration during the existence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, particularly in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among the wealthy elite, funerals became increasingly opulent, with the commissioning of intricate and costly decorations, and the incorporation of set elements of elaborate ceremonial. The triumphant procession which accompanied the body to the church glorified the deceased through lavish pageantry, with

numerous mourners in attendance and decorative elements including classically-inspired triumphal arches for the procession to pass beneath. Within the church, the visual focus would be the *castrum doloris*, the temporary architectural structure surrounding the coffin (often audacious in its splendour, taking forms such as a baldachin or obelisk) and, frequently, the coffin portrait, which acted as the centrepiece for commemorative practices and depicted the deceased as present at their own funeral.

The extravagant nature of funerary art in Poland-Lithuania was spearheaded to a large degree by the *szlachta*, a formidable noble social class that enjoyed growing political power and increasingly adopted ostentatious ceremonial as a means of communicating their enduring high status. Funerals were occasions not simply for performing the rites of mourning, but also for self-glorification and the display of wealth and heraldic prestige. Various examples discussed in this chapter, particularly the burials of the Opaliński magnate dynasty, evidence the ways in which the multifaceted referencing of heraldry was accomplished through funerary artworks and sermons. This chapter, then, suggests how elaborate funerary ceremonial and imagery formerly associated exclusively with the royal court were thereafter appropriated by the wider Polish-Lithuanian nobility, who adopted these visual displays to communicate both the worldly distinctions of their families and the spiritual riches of their own immortality. While this chapter has dealt primarily with the *szlachta*, it also indicates that certain aspects of elite burials would, in turn, be mimicked by wealthy burghers who aspired to the cultural signifiers of noble status, showing how widely these funerary practices came to be replicated within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

In addition to communicating the prestige of the *szlachta*, this chapter has demonstrated how such funerals also served the function of indicating the immortality of their subjects. Perhaps nothing epitomises this more than the tradition of the coffin portrait: representing the spiritual body that was to rise at the Last Judgement, the display of these likenesses at funerals and their frequent re-use in memorial plaques and funerary monuments evoked resurrection and provided a sense of continuity between the land of the living and that of the dead. As this chapter has argued, this clear distinction between the spiritual body and the natural body is highly resonant of the ways in which a medieval king combined the 'Body natural' and the perpetual office of king, the 'Body politic', and again encapsulates how fully the *szlachta* drew from funerary symbols evoking royal status and noble lineage.

This chapter has, in addition, situated these funerary traditions within wider European cultures of commemoration. Funerary processions and *castrum doloris* architecture in Poland-Lithuania were influenced, for instance, by

pan-European burial practices; knowledge of these was transmitted by means of printed imagery as well as by the work of foreign-born architects residing in Poland-Lithuania discussed in this chapter, among them Tylman van Gameren and Giovanni Battista Gisleni. Yet, it is also striking how the Polish-Lithuanian elites turned to indigenous visual forms as a means of asserting their status. The appeal of the coffin portrait – a tradition that was largely unique to Poland-Lithuania – is perhaps the key example of this, showing how, despite wider influences from Europe, cultures of commemoration within the Commonwealth also drew from more regionally-specific artistic practices, both royal and heraldic, that rooted the enduring status of the *szlachta* as well as the aspirations of wealthy burghers within well-defined symbols of Polish-Lithuanian society.

Architectures and Landscapes of Death: Funerary Chapels and Jerusalem Sites

While conspicuous mourning at funerals and the commissioning of coffin portraits, upon which the previous chapter focused, represent the most prevalent forms of posthumous commemoration in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, another important feature of remembrance culture, although available only to the very wealthy, was the erection of family funerary chapels. Where finances of patrons allowed, tomb chapels were commissioned to provide the ultimate dynastic resting place, a permanent architectural structure where masses could be said for the souls of the privileged deceased. Art historian Jerzy Łoziński in his study of Polish *grobowe kaplice kopułowe* (domed funerary chapels) catalogued such buildings in 130 locations in just the period 1520–1620, with more than one tomb chapel erected at many of these, drawing attention to their particular abundance in this region in the early modern period.¹ Peaking in popularity in the seventeenth century, with several key examples falling outside Łoziński's timeframe, these mausolea were commissioned in imitation of monarchical precedent by the *szlachta* and even wealthy burghers.

The widespread adoption of the domed chapel in this part of Central Europe bears witness not only to the priorities of local patronage groups, who invested significantly in funerary and commemorative art during the period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but also to the enduring symbolic significance of this type of architecture. Taking into account the genesis of the domed chapel in ancient and Christian architecture, this chapter argues that Polish, as well as Lithuanian, domed chapels commissioned from the sixteenth century onwards were meant as a conscious visual reference to the *loca sancta* (holy sites) of the Holy Land, with the dome being understood as symbolic of resurrection.

1 Łoziński's study includes a map showing the geographical distribution of these architectural structures across Poland. See Łoziński, 1973, p. 284. See also Jerzy Z. Łoziński, 'Die zentralen Grabkapellen in Polen', *Actes du Congrès international d'histoire de l'art, Budapest 1969*, 1, Budapest, 1972, pp. 667–676. Jan Białostocki included a version of Łoziński's map of Polish centrally planned chapels in his study of Renaissance art in Central Europe. See Jan Białostocki, *The Art of the Renaissance in Eastern Europe: Hungary. Bohemia. Poland*, Oxford 1976, p. 44.

The particular proliferation of funerary chapels in early modern Poland-Lithuania, furthermore, coincides with the growth of chapel architecture in monumental re-creations of Jerusalem (also referred to as *sacri monti* or holy mountains) built upon land belonging to the religious orders, in particular the Franciscans. Such devotional landscapes, several of which were established in Poland especially from the late sixteenth century onwards, relied upon mnemonic topography to create an evocative setting for the theatrical re-enactment of the Passion. By mapping imitations of Holy Land landmarks onto a local landscape, Jerusalem sites enabled worshippers to relive the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ as part of a 'middle distance pilgrimage' rather than the effortful 'long-distance' alternative.² Of these, I focus especially on the architecture and devotional spectacle at the seventeenth-century pilgrimage landscape of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska (the Zebrzydowski Calvary) near Kraków, a site of international architectural and religious significance which merited an engraved depiction in Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg's ambitious *Civitates orbis terrarum* (Fig. 55).³

Investigating the architectural setting for private mourning alongside contemporaneous pilgrimage practice, the chapter culminates with case studies of the outstanding iconographic programmes at seventeenth-century domed funerary chapels in Lwów (now Lviv in Ukraine) and Tarłów in south-east Poland. The mausoleum of the Boim merchant family in Lviv is notable for its intricate Passion cycle, providing thematic as well as stylistic links with the architectural and artistic commissions for Jerusalem sites in the region, in particular Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. The Oleśnicki Funerary Chapel in Tarłów, meanwhile, demonstrates a desire for artistic innovation within the domed mausoleum format, employing the Dance of Death theme, then rarely seen in Poland-Lithuania, to create a distinct and macabre decorative scheme in which the defining qualities of the noble estate, ranging from its military prowess to political privileges, are visually expressed. Built as an alternative to this noble family's former burial chapel at the pilgrimage site of Święty Krzyż (Holy Cross), the case of the Tarłów mausoleum also highlights the dynastic conflicts that could arise as a result of decisions taken regarding prestigious family burials.

2 For the distinction between a 'long-distance pilgrimage' to, for example, Jerusalem, and a 'middle distance pilgrimage', see Paul Davies and Deborah Howard, 'Introduction', in Paul Davies, Deborah Howard and Wendy Pullan eds., *Architecture and Pilgrimage, 1000–1500: Southern Europe and Beyond*, Farnham 2013, p. 3.

3 Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg, *Civitates orbis terrarum*, vol. VI, Cologne 1618, no. 45. See also Füßel, 2011, pp. 481 and 483.



FIGURE 55 Kalwaria Zebrzydowska in: Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg, *Civitates orbis terrarum*, vol. VI, Cologne 1618.

PHOTOGRAPH: BIBLIOTEKA NARODOWA, WARSAW

The Introduction of the Domed Chapel to Poland and Lithuania: Genesis and Symbolism

Circular temples were popular among the Romans and their legacy was secured by the inclusion of such structures in the influential 'Ten Books on Architecture' written by architect Marcus Vitruvius Pollio in the first century BC.⁴ Continuing the tradition of using circular forms for places of worship, in the early Christian world the dome was frequently incorporated into *martyria*, buildings on places of religious significance such as the *loca sancta*.⁵ A close association emerged between the dome and the vaults of heaven, as acknowledged in the sixth century by Byzantine historian Procopius of Caesarea who, in an account of the Church of St. Sophia in Constantinople, claimed that its dome 'seems not to rest upon solid masonry, but to cover the space with its golden dome suspended from Heaven'.⁶

4 See Book IV, Chapter 8: Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, tr. Morris Hicky Morgan, New York 1960, pp. 122–125.

5 See André Grabar, *Martyrium. Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique*, 2 vols., Paris 1943–1946.

6 Book I of 'On the Buildings'. Procopius, *Buildings*, tr. H.B. Dewing and Glanville Downey, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London 1961, p. 21.

Drawing upon the legacy of ancient Rome and supported by contemporaneous publications, including Leon Battista Alberti's *De re aedificatoria* (1452), the dome re-emerged as a key feature of Renaissance architecture.⁷ This fashion was spurred on by feats of engineering such as Filippo Brunelleschi's dome of Florence Cathedral (1420–1436) as well as smaller structures, among them the Pazzi funerary chapel (1442 – c. 1465) at Florence's Basilica di Santa Croce (Church of the Holy Cross) and Donato Bramante's Tempietto (c. 1502–1514), built alongside the Church of San Pietro in Montorio in Rome in memory of St Peter's martyrdom. In Central Europe, the architectural rediscovery of the dome is associated with High Renaissance funerary chapel design, notably the burial place of Cardinal Tamás Bakócz (c. 1442–1521) at Esztergom Cathedral in Hungary, built from opulent red marble (1506–1507), and the so-called Sigismund Chapel at Wawel Cathedral in Kraków (built in 1519–1533) commissioned by King Zygmunt I Jagiellon. The close intellectual and aesthetic engagement of these highly-educated Central European patrons – both of whom had been taught by humanists⁸ – with Italian culture contributed significantly to the speedy reception of Renaissance art and ideas within this part of the continent.⁹ Such processes of reception at the highest level had the potential to initiate regional trends, where favourable circumstances existed. Of these pioneering Hungarian and Polish Renaissance chapels, for instance, it was the Sigismund Chapel that served to inspire numerous direct and indirect imitations throughout the former Kingdom of Poland and also in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This early modern Central European architectural phenomenon deserves further attention here.

The Sigismund Chapel, formally the Chapel of the Assumption of the Virgin, was the first Polish religious building to be built in the Italian High Renaissance style (Fig. 56).¹⁰ It was commissioned in 1515 by Zygmunt I Jagiellon, better

7 In Book VII, Chapter 4 of his *De re aedificatoria*, Alberti claimed that 'Nature delights primarily in the circle'. Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, tr. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach and Robert Tavernor, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London 1988, p. 196.

8 DaCosta Kaufmann, 2004, p. 210.

9 Earl Rosenthal offered an early diffusionist analysis of the spread of the Renaissance style in European architecture, which related developments in Hungary and Poland to Italian models. See Rosenthal, 1978.

10 The most significant recent study of the Sigismund Chapel is Stanisław Mossakowski, *King Sigismund Chapel at Cracow Cathedral (1515–1533)*, Kraków 2012. See also Białostocki, 1976, pp. 35–44; Lech Kalinowski, 'Motywy antyczne w dekoracji kaplicy Zygmuntowskiej', *Folia Historiae Artium*, XII, 1976, pp. 67–94; Mieczysław Morka, 'Kaplica Zygmuntowska. Król Salomon – princeps fundator', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, LXVII, no. 1–2, 2005, pp. 59–96;



FIGURE 56 *Left: Attributed to Giovanni Battista Gisleni, Royal Vasa Chapel, completed 1676, Wawel Cathedral, Kraków./ Right: Bartolomeo Berrecci, Royal Sigismund Chapel, completed 1533, Wawel Cathedral, Kraków.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

known as Zygmunt Stary (Sigismund the Old), following the death of his first wife, the Hungarian Barbara Zápolya (1495–1515).¹¹ Erected alongside the south choir aisle of Wawel Cathedral in Kraków, then the capital of Poland, this opulent mausoleum was designed by architect Bartolomeo Berrecci (d. 1537)¹² from Pontassieve, near Florence, indicating the artistic ambitions of its royal patron. In what was to become a much-copied format across Poland and subsequently Poland-Lithuania, the chapel was built upon a centralised square plan, with a cube which morphs into an octagonal drum that in turn supports a circular dome and soaring lantern. Bringing together these separate elements, the visual continuity of the exterior was maintained by fluted Tuscan pilasters, which appear to taper towards a putto supporting a crown at the chapel's pinnacle. Modifying a Tuscan model,¹³ Berrecci chose to line the interior with grey-green limestone as well as Hungarian red marble, the latter being a key feature of the Bakócz Chapel at Esztergom, itself built in the Florentine style.¹⁴ As Jan Białostocki argued, synergies with Hungary were characteristic of the early assimilation of the Italian Renaissance in Polish architecture;¹⁵ notably, the sculptor Francesco of Florence (d. 1516), who was sourced from Hungary by the future Zygmunt I Jagiellon, went on to contribute to the remodelling of the royal castle at Wawel in the Renaissance style.¹⁶

The innovative interior of the Sigismund Chapel, however, places this Polish sepulchral building on a par with comparable major commissions in Italy. While its sculptural decoration combines elements from Christian iconography, such as tondi depicting biblical rulers, and Roman antiquity – the profusion of mythological reliefs is unique in Poland for such a chapel – the coffering of its cupola echoes that at the contemporaneous Medici Chapel (1519–1525), designed by Michelangelo for the Church of San Lorenzo in Florence.¹⁷ Despite

Rodov, 2013, pp. 31–34; Karolina Targosz, 'Kaplica Zygmuntowska jako Neoplatoński model świata', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, XLVIII, no. 2–4, 1986, pp. 131–163.

11 Władysław Pociecha, 'Barbara Zapolya', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, I, 1935, pp. 293–294.

12 Sometimes spelt 'Bartolommeo Berrecci'. See Stefan S. Komornicki, 'Berrecci Bartolommeo', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, I, 1935, pp. 467–469.

13 For a comparison with the work of the Tuscan architect Giuliano da Sangallo, see Stanisław Mossakowski, 'Bartolomeo Berrecci à Cracovie: la chapelle Sigismond', *Revue de l'Art*, CI, 1993, pp. 68–69.

14 Białostocki, 1976, p. 33.

15 Ibid., p. 29.

16 Mossakowski, 2012, p. 28. See also Adam Bochnak, 'Franciszek Florentczyk', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, VII, 1948–1958, pp. 76–77; Andrzej Fischinger and Marcin Fabiański, *The Renaissance Wawel: Building the Royal Residence*, Kraków 2013.

17 Mossakowski, 2012, p. 281.

its geographical distance from Italy, therefore, the Sigismund Chapel has been identified by Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann as meriting consideration among the most innovative European funerary chapel designs of its time.¹⁸

Even more significantly, the Sigismund Chapel, already a pioneering Renaissance building within a wider European context, initiated an independent and variegated local tradition of domed sepulchral chapels throughout Poland, with examples also appearing in Lithuania. Tracing the architectural influence of this royal mausoleum in Poland, Jerzy Łoziński demonstrated that it acted as a strong regional prototype, in particular within the local Kraków area but also reaching farther parts of the Kingdom, such as Lviv.¹⁹ The longevity of this phenomenon, which led to Poland-Lithuania becoming one of Europe's principle centres for Baroque chapel architecture, suggests limits to simplistic models of diffusion which place Western Europe at the centre of artistic innovation across the continent.

While the clustering of domed funerary chapels in the former Kingdom of Poland was unprecedented in Central Europe, it was in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania that this architectural form found one of its most elaborate expressions. In Vilnius, the patronage of the House of Vasa facilitated the building of the Royal Chapel of St Kazimierz (completed in 1636) at the city's cathedral, a project overseen by architect and sculptor Constante Tencalla (c. 1590–1646), who had previously worked at St Peter's Basilica in Rome.²⁰ Intended to commemorate the brief life of St Kazimierz (St Casimir, 1458–1484), a member of the Jagiellonian dynasty who had been born in Kraków but died in Lithuania, this Baroque structure followed the royal precedent of the Sigismund Chapel in its design, consisting of a cube surmounted by an octagonal drum that supports a circular dome topped by a lantern (Fig. 57).²¹ This architectural reference was especially appropriate in this instance, given that the Sigismund Chapel was the most prominent existing structure in Poland-Lithuania dedicated to the Jagiellonians.

The Royal Chapel of St Kazimierz, commissioned following his canonisation in 1602, stood out from other domed burial places based upon the Sigismund Chapel model, however. It was one of the most lavish examples of

18 DaCosta Kaufmann, 1995, p. 56.

19 Łoziński, 1973, p. 284.

20 For the Royal Chapel of St Kazimierz, see Ališauskas and Paknys, 2004; Łoziński, 1973, p. 279; Miłobędzki, 1980, pp. 188–190.

21 Karol Górski, 'Kazimierz Jagiellończyk', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XII, 1966–1967, pp. 286–288. For the *translatio* of St Kazimierz's relics to the new chapel in 1636, a ceremony that was attended by King Władysław IV, see Frick 2013, p. 21.



FIGURE 57 *Constante Tencalla, Royal Chapel of St Kazimierz, completed 1636, Cathedral, Vilnius.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

such architecture in Poland-Lithuania, with its reliquary function being articulated through the lavish employment of silver and marble. The ornate stucco decoration that was added during later renovations, meanwhile, was executed by none other than Pietro Perti, who had demonstrated his skills during his previous prestigious commission at Vilnius's Church of St Peter and St Paul, discussed in Chapter 2. Conceived jointly as the burial place of a Jagiellonian and a pilgrimage destination, therefore, St Kazimierz's resting place in Lithuania provided a dynastic and devotional setting ideally suited to the nuanced symbolism of the domed chapel, with its allusions to imperial Rome, *martyria* and resurrection. Moreover, this architectural successor to the royal chapels of Wawel Cathedral, located not in Kraków but in the principal city of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, constitutes an apt artistic articulation of the Union of Lublin, resulting as it did from shared aspects of the Commonwealth's religious and artistic culture as well as an intertwined political history.

The widespread impact of the Sigismund Chapel upon sepulchral architecture in Poland and later in Lithuania should be ascribed not only to this mausoleum's innovation and association with the powerful Jagiellonian dynasty, but also to the enduring significance of the symbolic allusions inherent in its format, which made it such a fitting model for funerary buildings. Representing the earthly realm, the solid cube of the chapel alludes to stability, while the octagonal drum is symbolic of rebirth, as discussed in Chapter 4. It is through this rebirth that heaven, symbolised by the dome, can be reached.²² The association of domed structures with early *martyria*, meanwhile, encouraged the appropriation of this architectural format beyond the funerary context, in the design of pilgrimage chapels for Poland-Lithuania's newly-established Jerusalem sites.

Central European Landscapes of Death: Jerusalem Sites

The Holy Sepulchre, the presumed site of Christ's burial and Resurrection, provided a particularly powerful and enduring association between centralised buildings and the Christian funerary context. After Emperor Constantine's

22 For the architecture and meaning of the dome, see Rudolf Wittkower, 'The Centrally Planned Church in the Renaissance', *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, London 1998 (first published London 1949), pp. 14–40; Earl Baldwin Smith, *The Dome. A Study in the History of Ideas*, Princeton 1950; Karl Lehmann, 'The Dome of Heaven', *The Art Bulletin*, XXVII, no. 1, March 1945, pp. 1–27; John Shearman, *Only Connect...: Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance*, Princeton 1992, pp. 149–191.

workmen located the sacred places of the Holy Land in 325–326 AD, the sites where the Tomb of Christ and Golgotha had been discovered were cleared of surrounding debris. Architectural structures were gradually erected to define and protect these areas of pivotal Christian significance. The most important part of the Holy Sepulchre, the name given to the architectural structure covering the sites, was the rotunda built around the edicule,²³ the rectangular shrine covering the empty Tomb of Christ. Inspired by Roman imperial mausolea, the rotunda itself measured close to forty metres in diameter. Despite centuries of damage and rebuilding on the site of the Holy Sepulchre, the rotunda became a characteristic element of the holy site, better known as the Anastasis (the Resurrection).²⁴

In the Middle Ages, the architectural structures of Jerusalem's Holy Sepulchre began to be widely imitated throughout Europe, if not always in an accurate way.²⁵ One could argue that the architectural appropriation of this Christian monument became a substitute for maintaining control of Jerusalem, which the medieval Crusades to the Holy Land had failed to achieve, as well as providing a widely recognised allusion to Christ's Resurrection. Due to its association with resurrection, architectural copies of elements of the Holy Sepulchre frequently served as funerary chapels, for example the destroyed burial chapel of Bishop Meinwerk at Paderborn, erected around 1036. In Poland, important later imitations of the Holy Sepulchre include the domed Chapel of the Tomb of Christ (c. 1530–c.1538) at the monastery of the Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre in Miechów, north of Kraków.²⁶

23 From the Latin *aedicula*, meaning 'small temple'. For a study of the edicule, see Martin Biddle, *The Tomb of Christ*, Stroud 1999.

24 For the history and architecture of the Holy Sepulchre, see Charles Coüasnon, *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem*, tr. Claude Ross, London 1974; Virgilio Canio Corbo, *Il Santo Sepolcro di Gerusalemme. Aspetti archeologici dalle origini al periodo crociato*, 3 vols., Jerusalem 1982. For imitations of the Holy Sepulchre, see Geneviève Bresc-Bautier, 'Les imitations du Saint-Sépulchre de Jérusalem (IX^e–XV^e siècles). Archéologie d'une dévotion', *Revue d'Histoire de la Spiritualité*, L, 1974, pp. 319–342.

25 Krautheimer, 1942, p. 3.

26 For the Chapel of the Tomb of Christ at Miechów, see Jerzy Z. Łoziński, 'Miechowskie Sepulcrum Domini', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, XXXI, no.2, 1969, pp. 151–166. The construction of this chapel was directly relevant to the religious community who commissioned it. For the cult of the Holy Sepulchre in Poland, including a study of Miechów, see Jerzy Józef Kopeć, *Męka Pańska w religijnej kulturze polskiego średniowiecza: studium nad pasyjnymi motywami i tekstami liturgicznymi*, Warsaw 1975, pp. 263–309; Cyprian Wilanowski, ed., *Bożogrobcy w Polsce*, Warsaw 1999.

By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, large-scale Jerusalem sites that aimed to mimic the topography and *loca sancta* of the Holy Land were the locations for some of the most significant imitations of the architecture of the Holy Sepulchre in Central Europe.²⁷ While, as art historian Deborah Howard has argued, the 'physical experience of travel helped to fix the events of the life of Christ in the memory',²⁸ pilgrimage to the holy places was not always possible, being both costly and problematic due to the dominance of Islamic culture in the region. In the wake of the Counter-Reformation, when a direct emotional engagement with the experiences of Christ and the Virgin Mary was promoted, Jerusalem sites across Europe became popular alternatives for pilgrimage. When visiting such a devotional complex, pilgrims of all social backgrounds could imagine themselves following in Christ's footsteps, as Jesuit theologian Ignatius of Loyola had encouraged in his *Spiritual Exercises*.²⁹ Finding spiritual substitutes for pilgrimage to Jerusalem was not a new idea, however; in the Middle Ages, devotional exercises had also been used as an aid to reliving the Passion without any need for travel.³⁰

The first European Jerusalem site had been founded in the last quarter of the fifteenth century at Varallo, in the mountainous terrain of northern Italy. Later referred to by Cardinal Carlo Borromeo (1538–1584) as a 'New Jerusalem',³¹ it was created under the instruction of Franciscan friar Bernardino Caimi who had worked in the Holy Land and wished to propagate the cult of the holy places, which was so central to the Franciscans.³² The fashion for creating Jerusalem sites developed rapidly in Italy and beyond, especially after the

27 For a broad study of European *sacri monti*, see George Kubler, 'Sacred Mountains in Europe and America', in Timothy Verdon and John Henderson eds., *Christianity and the Renaissance: Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento*, New York 1990, pp. 413–441; Amilcare Barbero, ed., *Atlante dei sacri monti, calvari e complessi devozionali europei/ Atlas of Holy Mountains, Calvaries and Devotional Complexes in Europe*, Novara 2001.

28 Deborah Howard, *Venice & the East: The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture 1100–1500*, New Haven and London 2000, p. 197.

29 Loyola, 2004.

30 See Lucy Donkin and Hanna Vorholt, eds., *Imagining Jerusalem in the Medieval West*, Oxford 2012; Kathryn M. Rudy, *Virtual Pilgrimages in the Convent: Imagining Jerusalem in the Late Middle Ages*, Turnhout 2011.

31 Giovanni Careri, *Baroques*, Princeton 2003, p. 69.

32 See Annabel Jane Wharton, 'Fabricated Jerusalem: Franciscans and Pious Mountains', in Annabel Jane Wharton, *Selling Jerusalem: Relics, Replicas, Theme Parks*, Chicago 2006, pp. 97–143.

Council of Trent. Examples in Central Europe include both small and extensive Calvary sites, ranging from the isolated Calvary Church atop Calvary Hill in Kőszeg, Hungary, built following the devastating plague of 1712 (completed by 1734), to the complex of chapels at Banská Štiavnica in Slovakia, built in 1744–1751, both of which were created under the direction of the Jesuit Order. The largest such pilgrimage site in Central Europe and the earliest in Poland-Lithuania, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, was founded in the early seventeenth century for the Observant Franciscans; both Franciscans and Jesuits alike were keen to use these sites for public proselytising.³³

Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, south-west of Kraków, owes its existence and name to magnate Mikołaj Zebrzydowski (1553–1620), *wojewoda* of Kraków from 1601. Zebrzydowski began work on the site in 1600, having financially supported his courtier, nobleman Hieronim Strzała (c. 1555–1620),³⁴ to travel to the Holy Land in 1596 to obtain – among others – further details about its religious sites. Strzała had returned in 1597, having gained the title of ‘Knight of the Holy Sepulchre’, with plaster models of the Chapel of the Crucifixion at the Holy Sepulchre and the edicule covering the site of the Tomb of Christ, as well as measurements pertaining to the Way of the Cross.³⁵ Zebrzydowski, who had received a Jesuit education, initially intended to build only a private devotional chapel of the Crucifixion on the slopes of Mount Żarek. The Observant Franciscans, however, encouraged him to create an entire landscape park recalling Jerusalem, complete with numerous chapels that could be used by local pilgrims as well as foreign visitors; it also seemed appropriate to found an Observant Franciscan friary at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, which Mikołaj endowed in 1602.³⁶ Mathematician Feliks Żebrowski was commissioned to design the layout of the landscape park, which he did with the aid of *Theatrum terrae sanctae et biblicarum historiarum* by Dutch scholar Christiaan van Adrichem (1533–1585), an influential publication on the Holy Land that included an engraved map of Jerusalem at the time of Christ.³⁷ The local landscape was used to symbolise key sites in the Holy Land, with Mount Żarek

33 For an analysis of Polish Calvary sites within a European context, see Anna Mitkowska, *Polskie Kalwarie*, Wrocław 2003.

34 Irena Kaniewska, ‘Strzała Hieronim’, *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XLIV, 2006–2007, pp. 553–554.

35 Jerzy Szablowski, ‘Architektura Kalwarii Zebrzydowskiej (1600–1702)’, *Rocznik Krakowski*, xxiv, 1933, p. 82. The present edicule was built in 1809–1810; for a plan of the edicule as it looked in the first half of the seventeenth century, see *Ibid.*, fig. 59, p. 64.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

37 Christiaan van Adrichem, *Theatrum terrae sanctae et biblicarum historiarum cum tabulis geographicis aere expressis*, Cologne 1590. For maps of the Holy Land, see Kenneth

representing Golgotha, the Mount of Lanckorona representing the Mount of Olives, and the river Skawinka becoming Cedron. Two sets of pilgrimage paths were laid out in the landscape: the *Via Captivitatis* (the Way of Christ's Captivity) and the *Via Crucis* (the Way of the Cross). The life of Mary was also commemorated in another pilgrimage path with its own set of chapels.³⁸ Following Mikołaj Zebrzydowski's death in 1620, work on the Jerusalem site was continued under the auspices of his son, Jan, and his grandson, Michał, a continuity of patronage that was crucial to the development of this particularly intricate Jerusalem site. The interplay of topography and architecture at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska is recorded in an annotated engraving by Strasbourg-trained printmaker David Tscherning, produced in 1645 during his residence in Kraków, in which the expansive devotional landscape is shown to be dotted with chapels that can be identified by means of an alphabetical key.³⁹

Although the vast architectural project at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska was begun by the prominent Italian Jesuit architect Giovanni Maria Bernardoni (1541–1605), whose previous designs include the pioneering Baroque Corpus Christi Church at Nesvizh, his early death resulted in major stylistic changes under the guidance of his successor, the Flemish goldsmith and architect Paul Baudarth.⁴⁰ It was thanks to this later input by Baudarth that the majority of the chapels and churches at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, which were constructed between 1605 and 1632, owe a debt to Netherlandish Mannerism. Among the buildings erected were several domed structures, including the Gethsemane Chapel (Fig. 58); the Court of Pilate Church, which has an 'Ecce Homo' statue of Christ on the exterior balcony;⁴¹ and the so-called Church of the Holy Sepulchre, based upon the edicule (Fig. 59). The last of these bears a close resemblance to the much-imitated Holy Sepulchre chapel in Görlitz in eastern Germany, completed by 1504, which was renowned for being an accurate

Nebenzahl, *Maps of the Holy Land: Images of Terra Sancta through two millennia*, New York 1986.

38 For a history of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, see Efreim Obruśnik and Jacek Witaliński, *Polska Jerozolima: Kalwaria Zebrzydowska*, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska 2003; Wiesław Murawiec, *Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. Informator-przewodnik po zabytkach sztuki i architektury sakralnej*, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska 2005.

39 See Talbierska, 2011, pp. 171 and 373.

40 See Jerzy Szablowski, 'Baudarth Paweł (Baudaert)', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 1, 1935, p. 356. For the architecture of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, see Szablowski, 1933, pp. 1–118.

41 *Ecce Homo* ('Behold the man') refers to the announcement Pontius Pilate made when presenting the tortured Christ to the waiting crowd (John 19. 5). Other Passion-related artworks created for display at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska include Franciszek Lekszycki's cycle of four paintings at the Church of the Crucifixion, completed before 1658.



FIGURE 58 *Paul Baudarth, Gethsemane Chapel, 1605–1609, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES



FIGURE 59 Paul Baudarth, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, 1605–1609, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska.
PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

reproduction of the edicule.⁴² Although not unique within a pan-European context, Baudarth's domed chapels of the Passion constituted an innovation in Poland-Lithuania, being more experimental in their architecture than, for example, indigenous funerary chapels of the same period. Many were built on innovative ground plans, such as the pentagonal ground plan of the Gethsemane Chapel, or the Greek cross ground plan of the Court of Pilate Church. Art historians Jerzy Szablowski and Jerzy Łoziński suggested that the inspiration for these may have come from Sebastiano Serlio's (1475–1554) plans for centralised buildings, although there is no direct evidence that this was the case.⁴³

The cultural landscapes of Jerusalem sites such as Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, recalling the topography and sacred sites of Jerusalem, were intended as backdrops for vivid re-enactments of Christ's Passion as well as other biblical events. These dramatic landscapes of death provided a unique context in which pilgrims were encouraged to empathise with Christ's suffering during

42 For the Holy Sepulchre chapel in Görlitz, see Justin E.A. Kroesen, *The Sepulchrum Domini Through the Ages: Its Form and Function*, tr. Margaret Kofod, Leuven 2000, pp. 118–119; Colin Morris, *The Sepulchre of Christ and the Medieval West: From the Beginning to 1600*, Oxford 2005, pp. 354–356.

43 Łoziński, 1973, p. 110; Jerzy Szablowski, 1933, p. 45.

devotional rituals that took them along the *drożki* (pilgrimage paths) dotted with churches and chapels. An actor representing Christ would carry the cross from one chapel to another while the crowds of worshippers would sing Passion hymns. At Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, the Observant Franciscan friars oversaw these theatrical productions, with re-enactments of the Passion traditionally taking place on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Pilgrims participated in this spectacle by adopting the role of the onlookers who witnessed Christ's pain and humiliation. It was also possible for large numbers of worshippers to listen to sermons preached from stone pulpits built on the exterior of the chapels (see Figs. 58 and 59).

The ritual of re-enacting the Passion using the numerous chapels and *drożki* at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska was carefully choreographed and new devotional texts were published specifically for this purpose, as well as for individual use by pilgrims. One author of such publications was the Jesuit-educated cleric and nobleman Stanisław Grochowski (1542–1612).⁴⁴ His significant contributions to Polish Baroque literature include a translation of excerpts from the then recently-published *Paradisus sponsi et sponsae* (this influential work by the Jesuit Jan David first appeared in Antwerp in 1607), composed for the elite Brotherhood of the Passion at the Franciscan church in Kraków,⁴⁵ as well as a collection of Passion hymns for use at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, published in 1611.⁴⁶ In his writings, Grochowski was able to draw upon a first-hand account of the Holy Land compiled by Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł, the founder of the aforementioned Corpus Christi Church at Nesvizh, published in 1601.⁴⁷

Another author whose publications for Kalwaria Zebrzydowska deserve particular mention is Abraham Rożniatowski (d. 1665).⁴⁸ Rożniatowski, a nobleman, who, like Grochowski, had received a Jesuit education, was directly

44 Julian Lewański, 'Grochowski Stanisław', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, VIII, 1959–1960, pp. 597–599.

45 The Brotherhood of the Passion had been founded at the Franciscan church in Kraków in 1595.

46 Abraham Rożniatowski, *Pamiętka krwawej ofiary Pana Zbawiciela naszego Jezusa Chrystusa*, ed. Janusz S. Gruchała, Warsaw 2003, pp. 14–15. See also Stanisław Grochowski, *Himny O Męce Paskiej, do obrzędów Kalwaryi Zebrzydowskiej, y do tamecznego nabożeństwa, należące*, Kraków 1611; Aleksandra Oszczęda, *Poeta Wazów: studia o okolicznościowej poezji Stanisława Grochowskiego (1542–1612)*, Wrocław 1999.

47 Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł, *Hierosolymitana peregrinatio illustrissimi domini Nicolai Christophori Radzivili*, Braniewo 1601. See also Leszek Kukulski, ed., *Krzysztof Radziwiłł Sierotka: Podróż do Ziemi Świętej, Syrii i Egiptu 1582–1584*, Warsaw 1962.

48 Dariusz Synowiec, 'Rożniatowski (Rożniatowski) Abraham h. Sas', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XXXII, 1989–1991, pp. 455–456.

involved in organising the pilgrimage routes at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. In 1610 he wrote an influential Passion play that could be performed as part of the religious devotion: *Pamiętka krwawej ofiary Pana Zbawiciela naszego Jezusa Chrystusa* ('Memento of the Bloody Sacrifice of Our Saviour, Jesus Christ'), dedicated to the founder of this Polish *sacro monte*, Mikołaj Zebrzydowski.⁴⁹ Divided into sections to be performed at each chapel in turn, the format of the play is reminiscent of Loyola's Spiritual Exercises, the third week of which encouraged the contemplation of the events of the Passion in relation to specific places such as the houses of Caiaphas or Pilate.⁵⁰

Narrated in rhyming couplets by a guide who accompanies the pilgrims as they witness a re-enactment of the Passion, Roźniatowski's publication provides an important insight into the format of such seventeenth-century theatrical processions. The pilgrims are to follow the figure of Christ along the *drożki* while the narrator draws their attention to the events of the Passion, related in great detail, and encourages empathy with Christ's predicament. For example, the narrator invites the pilgrims to follow Christ across the river Cedron: 'Let us who want to emulate him, follow him across to witness what happens next'.⁵¹ Later, at the Gethsemane Chapel, the audience's emotional engagement is requested: 'Now offer up your eager ears, and let your hearts fill with remorse'.⁵² The compliance of the pilgrims is rewarded with often-graphic details of Christ's suffering; at the House of Caiaphas, for instance, we hear how he is hit in the face until blood pours onto the ground from his mouth and nose.⁵³

Abraham Roźniatowski's often uncompromising descriptions of Christ's physical suffering may appear to contrast with the refined architecture and sublime landscapes of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, yet they constituted a crucial element of the devotional experience for which Jerusalem sites were created. The popularity of such a pilgrimage experience is attested by the foundation of other large Jerusalem sites in nearby mountainous areas, for instance

49 Abraham Roźniatowski, *Pamiętka Krwawej Ofiary Pana Zbawiciela naszego Jezusa Chrystusa: Wedle mieysc Hierosolimskich nad Zebrzydowicami wykonterfetowanych*, Kraków 1610.

50 See Loyola, 2004, pp. 60–62.

51 Part II, verses 31–32: 'My też za nim, którzy go naśladować chcemy,/ przechodźmy, że tam dalszą sprawę obaczemy'. Roźniatowski, 2003, p. 35.

52 Part VI, verses 1–2: 'Już teraz ochotnego nadstawiajcie ucha,/już niechaj się rozplywa w sercach waszych skrucha'. Ibid., p. 40.

53 Part XIII, verses 60–63: 'A tu co bliższy Pana po gębie, po głowie/ pięściami, palcami tłuką, na twarz pluja,/ nogami bez litości depcą, policzkują./ Krew z gęby, z nozdrzy pluszczy pod nogi tyrańskie [...]'. Ibid., p. 58.

the Franciscan complex of Kalwaria Pałacowska near Przemyśl, founded in the second half of the seventeenth century, and the eighteenth-century Jerusalem site at Góra Świętej Anny (Sankt Annaberg) in Silesia, the administration of which was also given over to the Franciscans.⁵⁴ The Chapel of the Tomb of Christ at Góra Świętej Anny, as well as other architectural elements of this large Central European *sacro monte*, show the direct influence of Zebrzydowski's pilgrimage site.⁵⁵ Given that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, built to house a recumbent figure of the dead Christ, itself imitated the Holy Sepulchre chapel in Görlitz in eastern Germany rather than its namesake in Jerusalem, it is evident that the self-perpetuation of such landscapes of death across Europe relied mostly on regional networks of artistic transmission rather than constant re-engagement with the Holy Land.

The founding of large-scale Central European Jerusalem sites would not have been possible without the generosity of wealthy patrons such as Mikołaj Zebrzydowski and his heirs, who were encouraged by the religious orders to fund the creation of new contexts for the public contemplation of Christ's sacrifice and Resurrection; a pious act which, in turn, would contribute to their own and their family's salvation. With each pilgrimage chapel dedicated to a specific moment or place in the Passion narrative, these landscapes of death encouraged the faithful to contemplate every aspect of Christ's final days through mnemonic topography and theatrical re-enactment, in line with Ignatius of Loyola's instructions in his Spiritual Exercises, and so enabled them to 'imaginatively collapse all historic distance to the sharing of an as-if-present experience'.⁵⁶ Building upon existing local traditions of 'middle distance' pilgrimage,⁵⁷ such self-proclaimed re-creations of Jerusalem catered for those seeking a close emotional engagement with the events of the Passion within a geographically and linguistically-accessible environment.

54 For these *sacri monti*, see Józef Symeon Barcik, *Kalwaria Pałacowska*, Warsaw 1985; Mitkowska, 2003, pp. 136–160 and 186–192. In 1767, Franciscan friar Wacław Waxmański published a prayer book for use at Góra Świętej Anny, which became popular and was republished in the nineteenth century: Wacław Waxmański, *Nowa Jerozolima, albo Kalwarya całej męki Jezusowej i bolesney Matki Jego, Maryi Panny, wyrażająca drogi*, Racibórz 1842.

55 Szablowski, 1933, p. 50.

56 Shearman, 1992, p. 41.

57 For Polish pilgrimage practice prior to the establishment of regional Jerusalem sites, see Robert Maniura, *Pilgrimage to Images in the Fifteenth Century: The Origins of the Cult of Our Lady of Częstochowa*, Woodbridge 2004.

Decorating the Seventeenth-century Funerary Chapel: Sculpting the Passion and Personalising the Dance of Death

Given the proliferation of domed chapels in Polish-Lithuanian commemorative and devotional contexts, the artistic accomplishment of such buildings varies greatly, ranging from the generic and unembellished to the innovative and lavish. This section explores two profuse decorative cycles in funerary chapels erected in the Kingdom of Poland, both of which employ relief sculptures to create imposing reminders of mortality. Representing a range of burgher and noble patronage, the Boim Chapel in Lviv and the Oleśnicki Chapel in Tarłów demonstrate how the entire decorative scheme of such buildings could be employed to encourage meditation upon death. These mausolea will also be considered in the context of devotional architecture at contemporaneous pilgrimage sites, with which both share thematic links.

Begun in 1609 and consecrated in 1615, when Lviv was part of the Kingdom of Poland, the domed Boim funerary chapel, lying in close proximity to the city's cathedral, is one of the most opulent examples of seventeenth-century funerary architecture in Central Europe.⁵⁸ Erected at the same time as some of the earliest devotional chapels at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, and also Mannerist in style, its interior and exterior sculptural reliefs of Passion scenes betray Netherlandish influences and provide an important comparison with Poland-Lithuania's earliest *sacro monte*. Referred to within the family as the 'Gethsemane Chapel' in reference to the centrepiece of its opulent stone altarpiece,⁵⁹ the Boim Chapel's intricate decorative programme was the subject of a study by Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, who compared its extravagant west front (Fig. 60) to the main façade of the Calle de Liberos at Salamanca University (c. 1520).⁶⁰ Jan Białostocki, meanwhile, has likened its exterior

58 For the Boim Chapel, see Jan Białostocki, 'At the Crossroads of Classicism and Byzantinism: Leopoldian Architectural Achievements ca. A.D. 1600', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, VII, 1983, pp. 52–55; Mieczysław Gębarowicz, *Szkice z historii sztuki XVII w.*, Toruń 1966, pp. 26–65; Łoziński, 1973, pp. 231–239; Tadeusz Mańkowski, 'Kaplica Boimów we Lwowie', *Prace Komisji Historii Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Umiejętności*, VIII, 1946, pp. 308–316; Jurij Smirnow, *Kaplica boimów*, Lviv 2000.

59 See Gębarowicz, 1966, note 8, p. 34.

60 Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, 'Italian Sculptors and Sculpture Outside of Italy (chiefly in Central Europe): Problems of Approach, Possibilities of Reception', in Claire Farago ed., *Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America 1450–1650*, New Haven and London 1995, pp. 46–66.



FIGURE 60 *Attributed to Jan Scholz, Sculpted western façade, 1612–1615, Boim Chapel, Lviv.*
PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

ornamentation to an iconostasis,⁶¹ an acknowledgement of Lviv's Russian Orthodox heritage.

It is not only the Boim Chapel's architecture, however, but also its patronage which places it within a wider European context. Commissioned to house the remains of Hungarian merchant Jerzy Boim (or Boym) and his family, the chapel reflects the transnational profile of early-seventeenth-century Lviv, when this city was an important trading and artistic centre. Jerzy Boim (d. 1617), a Protestant convert to Catholicism who married the Polish Jadwiga Niżniowska, was a powerful member of Lviv's mercantile elite and served as consul of the town council; both he and his wife are, somewhat unusually, depicted in painted portraits displayed on the exterior north facade of their family chapel.⁶² The Boims had the considerable wealth necessary to commission their own funerary chapel, dedicated to the Passion of Christ, which originally stood within the boundaries of the cathedral cemetery. This lavish domed structure was the final resting place for the couple and twelve members of their family, including their son, the Padua-educated physician Paweł Boim (1581–1641),⁶³ who was to leave the substantial sum of 500 *złoty* for its upkeep in his will.⁶⁴ Despite being accessed not from the cathedral but, less salubriously, by its own entrance door from the cemetery, the Boim Chapel makes explicit architectural allusions to royal precedent. Like the Sigismund Chapel in Kraków, its dome rests on an octagonal drum, which sits atop the main cube of the chapel. In making these references, the Boim Chapel forms a geographical anomaly, lying to the east of the area of the former Kingdom of Poland where most domed funerary chapels catalogued by Łoziński are found.⁶⁵

The architectural design of the Boim mausoleum is attributed to Andrzej Bemer,⁶⁶ who was active in Lviv from 1584 and worked mainly for the city's burgher class. Born in Breslau, Silesia (now Wrocław), where Netherlandish Mannerism was influential,⁶⁷ Bemer often hired German and Netherlandish stonemasons to work with him on his architectural projects.⁶⁸ It is thought that the Boim Chapel was built in two stages. Between 1609 and 1611 the

61 Białostocki, 1983, p. 54.

62 Ibid., p. 52.

63 Helena Polackówna, 'Boym Paweł Jerzy', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, II, 1936, pp. 381–382.

64 Gębarowicz, 1966, p. 32.

65 Łoziński, 1973, p. 284.

66 Wincenty Ogrodziński, 'Bemer Andrzej', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, I, 1935, pp. 420–421.

67 For Netherlandish artistic influences in Silesia, see Mateusz Kapustka, Andrzej Kozieł and Piotr Oszczanowski, eds., *Niderlandyzm na Śląsku i w krajach ościennych*, Wrocław 2003.

68 Łoziński, 1973, p. 236.

architectural structure was completed, together with the interior decoration of the cupola; at this stage, Bemer worked with fellow-Silesian Hans (Jan) Pfister (1573 – before 1642),⁶⁹ to whom the stucco sculptures on the interior of the cupola are attributed. The decorative programmes of the western façade and the altar were developed further, however, in 1612–1615; at this point a less prolific sculptor from Eastern Prussia, Jan (or Hanusz) Scholz, is thought to have become involved in the project.⁷⁰ It is likely that the copious, even cluttered, decoration of the western façade, which masks the architectural elements below, was an afterthought without which the chapel would have looked considerably more restrained.⁷¹

While the concept for the Boim Chapel's rich programme of Passion iconography has sometimes been attributed to Walenty Wargocki (d. 1613), a canon of Lviv cathedral who bequeathed the sizable sum of 300 *złoty* towards the chapel's costs,⁷² it seems equally likely that printed imagery dictated the chapel's decorative scheme. Of the two horizontal sections forming the western façade, the upper is devoted to a series of Passion scenes likely based upon one of the many cycles of such iconography available in the seventeenth century.⁷³ At the centre of this upper section is a sculpture of the Descent from the Cross; on the left the Bearing of the Cross; and on the right the Nailing to the Cross. Smaller Passion scenes incorporated into this part of the façade include the Flagellation and Ecce Homo. In front of a circular window above is a sculpture of the crucified Christ flanked by the Virgin and John the Evangelist. Completing the Passion iconography on the exterior of the chapel is a contemplative figure of Christ below his Cross, placed atop the lantern (Fig. 16).

The representation of the Passion continues within the Boim Chapel, particularly upon the eastern wall, which is dedicated to a polychromed and once partially-gilded stone altarpiece. Unusually, the predella depicts a sacrificial meal of lamb, representing the Old Testament, above which is the largest scene showing Christ praying in the garden of Gethsemane (Fig. 61). To the left of this

69 Emanuel Rostworowski, 'Pfister (Fister, Phister) Jan (Hanus)', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, xxv, 1980, pp. 761–762.

70 Gębarowicz, 1966, pp. 41 and 53.

71 Łoziński, 1973, p. 237.

72 Gębarowicz, 1966, p. 45. Wargocki's bequest was a generous one; a teacher's annual salary in Lviv in the seventeenth century was 200 *złoty*. See Frick, 2013, p. 383.

73 Waldemar Deluga linked these Passion scenes to the vast *Thesaurus* published in 1585 in Antwerp by Gerard de Jode. However, the *Thesaurus* Passion prints do not provide a close enough match to convincingly identify them as a prototype for the Boim Chapel cycle. See Waldemar Deluga, 'The Influence of Prints on Painting in Eastern Europe', *Print Quarterly*, x, no. 3, September 1993, p. 226.



FIGURE 61 *Attributed to Jan Scholz, Passion altarpiece (detail: Christ praying in the garden of Gethsemane), 1612–1615, Boim Chapel, Lviv.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

is the Last Supper, with Satan sitting at the feet of Judas, while to the right Christ washes the feet of the disciples. These three scenes give the impression of a triptych, the theme of which is complemented by a rendition of the Crucifixion above, in the background of which is a domed circular building that alludes to the later architecture of Jerusalem. Further up are stucco scenes of the Resurrection and the Ascension, between which is the Adoration of the Lamb. The Last Judgement is included at the top of the altarpiece and the decoration continues on the cupola, where busts are placed within the coffers, among them prophets as well as an *Ecce Homo* depiction of Christ and angels holding the *Arma Christi* (Fig. 62). The adornment of the entire cupola interior with such intricate busts is attributed to Wrocław-born sculptor Hans Pfister. A key exponent of the Mannerist style in Lviv, Pfister is also known for the funerary chapel of the Ostrogski Family (1612–1620) in Tarnów Cathedral.⁷⁴

While the Boim mausoleum boasts one of the most elaborate sculpted Passion cycles in Europe, another important example of such iconography within a funerary context can be found just metres away, at the contemporaneous and richly-decorated Kampian Chapel at Lviv Cathedral, a project attributed



FIGURE 62 *Stucco cupola decoration attributed to Hans Pfister, Angel with cross and chalice, 1609–1611, Boim Chapel, Lviv.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

74 Piotr Krakowski, 'Pomnik nagrobny ks. Ostrogskich', *Studia renesansowe*, II, 1957, pp. 263–302.

to the Netherlandish sculptor Henryk Horst⁷⁵ and the aforementioned Andrzej Bemer. Founded by the Kraków and Bologna-educated physician and bibliophile Paweł Kampian (c. 1527–1600)⁷⁶ and completed by his son Marcin (c. 1574–1629),⁷⁷ who continued in the same profession, it is thought that an element of familial rivalry resulted in the commissioning of exterior relief cycles depicting the Passion at both chapels. At the Kampian mausoleum, completed around the time of Marcin's death, this theme was pared down to three large relief scenes showing the Entombment, Resurrection, and the *Noli me tangere* ('Touch me not') encounter between Christ and Mary Magdalen (Fig. 63); these, like the exterior Passion iconography of the Boim Chapel, were likely inspired by printed imagery.⁷⁸

In contrast to the ornate facades of Lviv's Boim and Kampian burgher chapels, the burial-place of the Oleśnicki *szlachta* dynasty at the remote village of Tarłów, north of Sandomierz, has a restrained exterior that belies the lavish decorative scheme within.⁷⁹ The Oleśnicki Funerary Chapel, formally the

75 The majority of the sculpted altarpiece in the Kampian Chapel is thought to have been executed by Horst, who was born in Groningen. See Józef Lepiarczyk and Marian Mika, 'Horst (Horszt, Horscht, Horstin, Horstyn, Horstain) Henryk (Endrych)', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, x, 1962–1964, pp. 16–17.

76 Halina Kowalska, 'Kampian (Novicampianus, Novicampus, Novus Campianus) Paweł', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, xi, 1964–1965, pp. 594–595. For physician Paweł Kampian within the context of his profession, see Anita Magowska, 'Complaints, Charges, and Claims: Apothecaries in Poland in the 16th and 17th Centuries', *Pharmacy in History*, L, no. 3, 2008, p. 102.

77 Halina Kowalska, 'Kampian (Campianus, Novicampianus) Marcin', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, xi, 1964–1965, pp. 592–594.

78 For the Kampian Chapel (also known as the Chapel of the Flagellated Christ), see Łoziński, 1973, pp. 228–231; Ihor Zhuk, 'The Architecture of Lviv from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Centuries', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, xxiv, 2000, pp. 104 and 106. Passion iconography also featured in elite commissions for commemorative art in seventeenth-century Lithuania. For example, a substantial stone monument to nobleman Jan Kazimierz Brzostowski (d. 1648) in the parish church in Veliuona (in Polish: Wielona) incorporates a painted portrait of the deceased together with a commemorative inscription above an altarpiece depicting the Ecce Homo figure of Christ. Here, prayers could be said for the soul of the deceased, thus fulfilling a similar function to a funerary chapel. I am grateful to Dr Giedrė Mickūnaitė for bringing my attention to this untypical funerary monument. See Jan Skłodowski, 'Pomnik nagrobny w kościele w Wielonie', *Spotkania z Zabytkami*, xxxvi, no. 9–10, September–October 2012, pp. 35–37.

79 For the Oleśnicki Chapel and its iconographic programme, see Koutny-Jones, 2009. See also Leśniakowska, 1984. For the Oleśnicki family see Jacek Pielas, *Oleśnicy herbu Dębno w XVI–XVII wieku: Studium z dziejów zamożnej szlachty doby nowożytnej*, Kielce 2007. In researching the artwork at Tarłów, I benefited from the kind assistance of the Rev. Jan



FIGURE 63 *Attributed to Andrzej Bemera and workshop, Exterior relief scenes showing the Entombment, Resurrection, and 'Noli me tangere', completed c. 1629, Kampian Chapel, Cathedral, Lviv.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

Chapel of Our Lord Jesus, forms the south transept of the Baroque Church of the Holy Trinity in Tarłów (1647–1655), which is thought to have been rebuilt by architect Jan Zaor under the patronage of Zbigniew Oleśnicki (1603–1662), governor of Opoczno and castellan of Wiślica. Rather than focusing on the Passion, this chapel's interior decoration was innovative in expounding the non-biblical theme of the Dance of Death. It is the earliest monumental treatment of this macabre motif in Poland-Lithuania, and among the most extensive and artistically-accomplished examples of such a cycle in Europe. Attributed to an Italian stucco artist known as the 'Master of Tarłów', the chapel's decoration is comparable to contemporaneous north Italian artwork and has been linked to other important commissions in Poland, among them the Loretan House at Gołąb near Kazimierz Dolny (completed c. 1650), one of the first such pilgrimage destinations in the Commonwealth.⁸⁰

Grochowski of the Church of the Holy Trinity in Tarłów, who gave me private access to the Oleśnicki Chapel.

80 Located to the south of the parish church in the village of Gołąb, the building of the Loretan House was funded by the parish priest, Stanisław Grzybowski. It was built c. 1638, although its sculptural decoration was only completed c. 1650. See Karpowicz, 1991, p. 307.

The unique and profuse interior decoration of the Oleśnicki Chapel includes a monumental Wheel of Death inside the cupola (Fig. 64), developing a theme also seen in Kraków in a contemporaneous print created there by David Tscherning and the related painting at Kraków's Augustinian friary (see Chapter 2). The individual sections of the Wheel contain tondi within which winged putti display symbols of earthly status: a papal tiara and staff; a bishop's mitre and crozier; a cap known as a *kotpak*, and a *butawa*; a cardinal's hat; a prince's crown and sceptre; and a king's crown. Around the circular base of the



FIGURE 64 *Stucco cupola and spandrel decoration attributed to the Master of Tarłów, The Wheel of Death and the Four Ages of Man, mid. 17th century, Oleśnicki Chapel, Parish Church of the Holy Trinity, Tarłów.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

dome is the familiar inscription *Statutum est omnibus hominibus semel mori post hoc autem iudicium* ('It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the Judgement', Hebrews 9.27), while stucco representations of Death and the Four Ages of Man fill the pendentives (Fig. 65). The powerful reminder of Death's omnipresence is continued in the numerous individual stucco scenes that decorate the chapel walls, the majority of which expound the Dance of Death motif. These draw upon a particularly wide range of printed sources, including Dance of Death publications linked to Hans Holbein the Younger's important woodcut cycle, as well as Otto van Veen's engravings from his popular *Emblemata Horatiana*, first published in Antwerp in 1607.⁸¹ The Dance of



FIGURE 65 *Attributed to the Master of Tartów, Youth and Death, mid. 17th century, Oleśnicki Chapel, Parish Church of the Holy Trinity, Tartów.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

81 Hans Holbein the Younger's series of Dance of Death woodcuts was first published in book form in 1538. For a list of those Dance of Death publications that copied and expanded Holbein's original series and, in turn, influenced the depiction of this theme at the Oleśnicki Chapel, see Koutny-Jones, 2009, p. 169. For the engravings of Otto van Veen (Vaenius) that acted as a model for the large Dance of Death scenes on the south wall of the Oleśnicki Chapel, see Otto van Veen, *Quinti Horatii Flacci Emblemata*, Antwerp 1607, pp. 197 and 203. For the impact of Van Veen's work upon Polish-Lithuanian art, see also Mariusz Karpowicz, *Sztuka oświeconego sarmatyzmu. Antykizacja i klasycyzacja w środowisku warszawskim czasów Jana III*, Warsaw 1986, pp. 123–130; Grześkowiak and Niedźwiedź, 2012, pp. 47–68.

Death motif is modified at Tarłów, however, to specifically reflect the established *szlachta* background of the Oleśnicki Chapel's patrons, incorporating distinctive elements of heraldry and indigenous costumes, particularly those associated with the upper echelons of society. The stucco scenes, therefore, include Death debating with a traditionally-attired magnate and a nobleman in military dress (Fig. 66)⁸² as well as an image of Death on the battlefield; the latter two depictions reference the Oleśnickis active involvement in military campaigns, as befit the established *szlachta*.⁸³

The largest and most intricate Dance of Death scenes in the Oleśnicki Chapel are located either side of the window on the south wall and are notable for taking their inspiration from prints by Van Veen, as I have shown elsewhere.⁸⁴ On the left relief, a mature man bids farewell to a crying woman and small child as a shrouded figure of Death leads him away. In the background is an archway surmounted by the Oleśnicki family's Dębno coat of arms, indicating the dynastic impact of a death in the family. On the right is a more oblique scene, representing Death greeting a pilgrim who holds a staff and wears a broad-brimmed hat and the familiar scallop shells (Fig. 67). The skeletal Death is both wealthy and magnanimous: it wears a luxurious fur-lined *delia* and holds a red purse from which it offers the pilgrim a coin. This scene could be interpreted metaphorically, with Death giving the pilgrim alms to speed his journey to the next world, as symbolised by the archway in the background. Alternatively, it may refer to the dangers of long-distance pilgrimages undertaken by members of affluent families such as the Oleśnickis. This second interpretation would help to explain the presence of a background figure wearing a turban, alluding to the 'exotic' encounters afforded by religious expeditions.

It is telling that the architecture of Tarłów parish church had to be defended in a poem by Anna Oleśnicka née Stanisławska (1650–1701), wife of the final representative of the Oleśnicki line, Jan Zbigniew Oleśnicki (d. after 1670), as

82 The portrayal of Death and the nobleman in military dress is replete with accurate references to indigenous warfare. From the nobleman's right side hangs a horsewhip, since mounted conflict was a staple of warfare in Poland-Lithuania. He also carries a curved sabre and a *czekan* (an axe for breaking helmets). Both of these weapons are typical of a nobleman, as is the fashion for partially shaving the head, which is revealed when he raises his feathered hat to greet the cadaver. Across his chest, the nobleman wears a red knapsack to carry provisions, below which hangs a pipe.

83 For examples of the Oleśnickis support during military crises, see the biography of Jan Zbigniew Oleśnicki's father, Jan Oleśnicki (d. 1675). Adam Przyboś, 'Oleśnicki Jan z Oleśnicy h. Dębno', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XXIII, 1978, pp. 767–768.

84 See Koutny-Jones, 2009, pp. 182–188.



FIGURE 66 *Attributed to the Master of Tartów, Death and a Polish nobleman in military dress, armed with a sabre and 'czekan', mid. 17th century, Oleśnicki Chapel, Parish Church of the Holy Trinity, Tartów.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES



FIGURE 67 *Attributed to the Master of Tartów, Pilgrim and Death, mid. 17th century, Oleśnicki Chapel, Parish Church of the Holy Trinity, Tartów.*
PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

'being worthy of laying to rest the bodies of those who founded it'.⁸⁵ Since burial places were crucial to the posthumous reputation of a dynasty, their location as well as form was of crucial importance. For the Oleśnickis, this resulted in a dispute between those family members who preferred the newly-built mausoleum at Tarłów and those who favoured a previous funerary chapel at the Benedictine monastery at Święty Krzyż, east of Kielce, completed just thirty-five years earlier.⁸⁶ Święty Krzyż formed part of a devotional landscape that attracted pilgrims who came to see its relic of the True Cross, the association with which would have meant that any adjacent burial chapel could potentially be visited by large numbers of worshippers, while the presence of the Benedictines would have ensured that mass would be celebrated in perpetuity for the souls of the benefactors. Given the shared devotional aims and architectural solutions of funerary chapels and pilgrimage sites highlighted in this chapter, it is initially surprising that the Oleśnickis chose Tarłów as their resting place over the highly-regarded Święty Krzyż. An explanation lies, perhaps, in the pioneering stucco decoration of their Tarłów chapel, whose acknowledgement of mortality and the decomposition of the body would have been less appropriate at Święty Krzyż, which was associated with the more traditional, biblical contemplation of Christ's Passion. For ambitious patrons wishing to break from artistic convention and demonstrate their intellectual independence as well as social distinction, an unencumbered location such as Tarłów parish church, over which the Oleśnickis had full control, provided a blank canvas that could be used to subvert the domed mausoleum's allusions to royalty and resurrection in favour of a more macabre and self-reflective message.

The close links of particular elite patrons to individual burial chapels in Poland-Lithuania, and the dynastic significance embedded in them, meant that the ornamentation of these spaces often differed significantly. For instance, the Passion iconography commissioned by the Boims and Kampians, despite the apparent rivalry between these Lviv burgher families, was somewhat

85 'Struktura też godna tego, / By w niej te ciała złożyli/ tych, co ją tu wystawili'. For the full text see Janina Ruszczycówna, 'Trzy portrety polskiej poetki XVII wieku (Anna ze Stanisławskich Zbąska)', *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, XIII, no. 1, 1969, pp. 321–363. For Anna Oleśnicka see Aleksander Brückner, 'Źródła do dziejów literatury i oświaty polskiej: pierwsza autorka polska i jej autobiografia wierszami', *Biblioteka Warszawska*, IV, no. 3, December 1893, 424–429; Maya Peretz, 'In Search of the First Polish Woman Author', *The Polish Review*, XXXVIII, no. 4, 1993, pp. 469–483.

86 Anna Oleśnicka wrote that: 'My father[–in-law] was angry at me, as he wanted my husband to/ be buried at Holy Cross' ('Ociec się na mnie o to gniewał, że/ chciał mego męża chować u st. Krzyża'). For the Oleśnicki Chapel at Święty Krzyż, see Łoziński, 1973, pp. 182–184.

traditional in expounding established theological understandings of the domed mausoleum as a place to commemorate death and to rejoice in the promise of Redemption through Christ. As such, these decorative schemes would have provided copious visual aids for meditation upon Christ's final days, a practice encouraged by Loyola in his Spiritual Exercises and promoted at contemporaneous Jerusalem sites. The noble Oleśnicki patrons of Tarłów were, in contrast, pioneering in commissioning an entire iconographic programme based on the macabre Dance of Death theme, then a novelty in Polish-Lithuanian art. The only other example of the *taniec śmierci* in such a lavish architectural setting to be produced in the Commonwealth survives in fragments in the Kotowski Funerary Chapel (1691–1694) at the Dominican Church of St. Hyacinth in Warsaw (Fig. 68).⁸⁷ This domed chapel was founded by an ennobled peasant, Adam Kotowski (d. 1693), who rose to become the King's secretary. It contains the elaborate funerary monuments of Kotowski and his wife, Małgorzata, who was the daughter of a French tailor at the royal court; the couple had no children.⁸⁸ Their lavish chapel was designed by Tylman van Gameren⁸⁹ and contains one intact wall painting depicting Death abducting a woman to the dismay of her husband (Fig. 69).⁹⁰ This painting, in which the husband and

87 During the Second World War the dome of the chapel was destroyed and the interior ornamentation damaged; extensive restoration work was completed in 1984. Maria Kałamajska-Saeed, ed., 'Miasto Warszawa: Nowe Miasto', *Katalog Zabytków Sztuki w Polsce. Seria nowa*, XI, no. 2, 2001, p. 50.

88 Adam Kotowski, the son of a Silesian serf whose surname was 'Kot', gained noble status in 1659 and changed his name to reflect this. The Kotowski couple were great patrons of the arts. For Adam Kotowski and Małgorzata Kotowska see Antonina Keckowa, 'Kotowska z Durantów Małgorzata (1637–1690)', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XIV, 1968–1969, p. 487; Antonina Keckowa, 'Kotowski (pierwotne nazwisko Kot) Adam (zm. 1693)', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XIV, 1968–1969, p. 488.

89 The original drawings for this project form part of the Tylman van Gameren Archive at the Print Room of the University of Warsaw Library. The extant architectural designs comprise drawings for the northern façade (AT 784 recto); the ground plan (AT 55 recto); the ground plan and a cross-section of the chapel (AT 54, AT 446 verso, AT 59 verso); the ground plan and north façade (AT 53); the design of the lantern (AT 785); the entrance to the chapel from the church and details of the portal (AT 52 recto, AT 57, AT 58 recto and AT 59 recto); and the stairs to the chapel (AT 56 recto). The remaining designs are for the interior decoration: the altar (AT 60, AT 61, AT 829, AT 830 recto, AT 831), and Małgorzata Kotowska's funerary monument (AT 63 recto, AT 64 recto, AT 65, AT 66 recto). For brief descriptions of each drawing, see Mossakowski, 1973, pp. 204–207; Mossakowski, 1994, pp. 205–211. For the drawings, see also Topińska, 2003, pp. 136–140.

90 This Dance of Death painting within a stucco frame is located to the right of the entrance to the Kotowski Chapel. It is likely that this was one of at least four wall paintings comprising a



FIGURE 68 *Tylman van Gameren, Kotowski Chapel, 1691–1694, Dominican Church, Warsaw.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES

wife wear classical-style drapery, may have been inspired by a 1640s etching by the Florentine artist Stefano della Bella (1610–1664), whose work was well-known

Dance of Death cycle within the chapel. Little survives of the other images once located in matching stucco frames, aside from a damaged depiction of a skeleton wearing a red shroud.



FIGURE 69 *Anonymous artist, Death abducting a woman, 1691–1694, Kotowski Chapel, Dominican Church, Warsaw.*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEKSANDRA KOUTNY-JONES



FIGURE 70 *Stefano della Bella*, Cadaver abducting a woman, late 1640s.
PHOTOGRAPH: WELLCOME LIBRARY, LONDON

in Poland-Lithuania (Fig. 70).⁹¹ Unlike at Tarłów, at the Kotowski Chapel the Dance of Death is harnessed to portray marital devotion rather than to articulate social status, and it lacks the allusions to the Polish-Lithuanian noble estate that were present in the Oleśnicki Chapel. These divergent examples of the Dance of Death motif, both commissioned for an elite commemorative context, demonstrate how the domed mausolea of Poland-Lithuania had the capacity to be fashioned as highly personalised spaces, showcasing the specific priorities of their privileged patrons.

Conclusion

Among the most extravagant architectural commissions in Poland-Lithuania were those related to cultures of death and mourning. Wealthy patrons, both established nobility and prosperous burghers, lavished their patronage upon chapel architecture, either for their own posthumous commemoration or for the purposes of public devotion at pilgrimage sites, both of which would be intended to contribute to their salvation by ostentatiously manifesting their pious intentions and creating religious spaces in which masses could be said. The format of such chapels, which frequently incorporated a cupola, referenced the architectural setting for the Tomb of Christ at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem as well as a renowned local prototype: the lavish royal Sigismund Chapel at Kraków's Wawel Cathedral, the first religious building in Poland constructed in the Italian High Renaissance style. The examples of chapel architecture selected for discussion in this chapter, found in remote village locations as well as key cities such as Vilnius and Lviv, are of wider European significance, either by virtue of their elaborate and innovative ornamentation,

91 This is one of a set of five death-related oval etchings executed by Stefano della Bella; these have not previously been linked to the decoration of the Kotowski Chapel. For the etchings, see Phyllis Dearborn Massar, *Presenting Stefano della Bella: Seventeenth-century Printmaker*, New York 1971, pp. 121–128; Anna Forlani Tempesti, *Mostra di incisioni di Stefano della Bella*, Florence 1973, illustrations 58, 59, 91, 92, 93, 94; Alexandre De Vesme and Phyllis Dearborn Massar, *Stefano della Bella: Catalogue Raisonné: Text*, New York 1971, pp. 66–67; Françoise Viatte, 'Stephano della Bella. Le cinque morti', *Arte Illustrata*, V, June 1972, no. 49, pp. 198–209. For the historical context of Stefano della Bella's death-related prints, see Hans Wilderott, ed., *Das große Sterben: Seuchen machen Geschichte*, exhibition catalogue, Deutsches Hygiene-Museum, Dresden 8 December 1995–March 1996, Berlin 1995, p. 153. For Stefano della Bella and Poland, see Helena Kicińska, *Stefano della Bella. 1610–1664. Polonica*, exhibition catalogue, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, Kraków 1972.

or because they form part of some of Central Europe's most important and enduring pilgrimage destinations: purpose-built Jerusalem sites.

The Jesuit and Franciscan orders were crucial to the establishment of monumental projections of Jerusalem in Central Europe, a process of artistic transmission that built on the success of earlier such sites elsewhere, notably in Italy. These devotional complexes, dotted with chapels recalling the events of the Passion, functioned on two levels: on the one hand they provided an instant itinerary for individual pilgrims, who could visit each chapel in turn and meditate upon Christ's final days as Loyola had instructed, yet, on the other hand, they could be transformed into vast theatrical landscapes in which Passion plays were enacted to crowds of worshippers. This performative emphasis, seen in other aspects of European death-related culture such as the plays in which the living encounter the dead, was particularly highly-developed at major religious sites such as Kalwaria Zebrzydowska near Kraków, where an expansive mnemonic landscape and complex architectural programme were brought to life through the many vivid vernacular scripts specially written for performance there. Constructed with those seeking a middle-distance pilgrimage in mind, yet desiring an 'authentic' experience of biblical events, Central European *sacri monti* were, in fact, more an imitation of their European predecessors in terms of form and function than their namesakes in the Holy Land.

Innovation in the context of Central European chapel architecture, in particular those buildings intended for a funerary context, came especially in the form of opulent ornamentation. Elements of inter and intra-familial rivalry can be discerned as a driving force in the commissioning of elaborate decorative schemes: in Lviv, the increasingly ambitious cycles of Passion iconography sculpted on the exterior walls of the mausolea of the Boim and Kampian families point to strong competition between members of this city's powerful burgher elite;⁹² in the village of Tarłów, meanwhile, the commissioning of the then-esoteric Dance of Death theme for the Oleśnicki family chapel may be considered a conscious divergence from this *szlachta* dynasty's more conventionally-styled burial place at Święty Krzyż Benedictine monastery. The widespread uptake of the ostentatious family mausoleum precedent set by the royal Sigismund Chapel and imitated in later royal commissions such as the Chapel of St Kazimierz in Vilnius, therefore, had a profound effect upon the higher echelons of commemorative culture of Poland-Lithuania. For the most wealthy, posthumous aspirations began to stretch beyond lavish burials and funerary monuments. In a state where the elected king was *primus inter*

92 See Gębarowicz, 1966, pp. 39–41. See also Władysław Łoziński, *Patrycyat i mieszczaństwo lwowskie w XVI i XVII wieku*, Lviv 1892.

pares, the *szlachta* and prominent burghers began to appropriate the domed mausoleum format as a signifier of their own inherited or acquired status, personalising it through the use of carefully-selected decoration. With its allusions to the architectural legacy of imperial Rome and the *loca sancta* of the Holy Land, moreover, the domed chapel format proliferated across Poland-Lithuania in a manner not seen elsewhere in Central Europe, leaving the most prominent legacy to the Commonwealth's preoccupation with conspicuous contemplation and commemoration.

Conclusion

As I have argued in this study, visual cultures of death in early modern Central Europe were characterised by conspicuous contemplation and extravagant commemoration. The particularly strong patronage groups in the united lands of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, ranging from the sizable and established noble estate, or *szlachta*, to emerging burgher elites, supported the development of a complex and multi-faceted *memento mori* culture not seen in Europe on this scale since the Middle Ages. Concurrently, the revived Roman Catholic Church in the Commonwealth visibly promoted reflection upon mortality through a range of prominent artworks and elaborate pilgrimage practices. It was against this backdrop of lay and religious priorities alike that a preoccupation with death and the afterlife shaped the artistic legacy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, combining pan-European devotional and ceremonial practice with elements of indigenous traditions.

This research has identified several characteristic features of cultures of death in Poland-Lithuania which combined to create a diverse visual emphasis upon contemplation and commemoration within the Commonwealth. The first of these was an overtly public approach to commemoration which, as has been argued, stemmed chiefly from the dynastic priorities of the *szlachta* estate, whose dominance was felt acutely in the spheres of politics, religion and culture. The assertion by Polish poet and nobleman Wacław Potocki, (1621–1696)¹ that ‘every man fashions his kinsmen as heroes’² was nowhere more true than in this group’s preoccupation with grand ancestry and dynastic allegiance. Their pride of pedigree was ostentatiously articulated in the unabashed pomp of *szlachta* burials, funerary monuments and chapels, which, through their opulence, also served to express the ancient ideal of magnificence.³ Although these forms of art were partly ephemeral, this study has drawn upon both literary and artistic sources to reconstruct the distinct funerary practices associated with such privileged minorities as well as those groups,

1 Stanisław Grzeszczuk, ‘Potocki Wacław Władysław h. Szreniawa’, *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, XXVIII, 1984–1985, pp. 220–224.

2 Potocki wrote that ‘Every man fashions his kinsmen as heroes,/Although born of a woman, he claims descent from a goddess’ (‘Každy swojego bohatera czyni./Choć się zrodził z niewiasty, potomkiem bogini’). See Wacław Potocki, *Poczet Herbow Szlachty Korony Polskiej y Wielkiego Xięstwa Litewskiego*, Kraków 1696, p. 42.

3 For the ancient ideal of magnificence and its humanist revival, see DaCosta Kaufmann, 2004, p. 210. For the Polish-Lithuanian elite and the ideal of magnificence, see DaCosta Kaufmann, 1995, p. 247.

such as wealthy burghers, who sought to emulate them. This has illuminated the often eccentric nuances of the Commonwealth's commemorative culture, which facilitated the emergence of esoteric art-forms, among them the coffin portrait, which flourished in the Protestant, Catholic as well as Orthodox communities of Poland-Lithuania.

An element of collective hubris was particularly noticeable in the *szlachta's* very public approach to death, however; even when the issue of mortality was addressed it could not detract from the overriding emphasis upon the endurance of dynastic status. Heraldic symbols featured heavily in funerary decorations such as triumphal arches and classical pyre-like structures, as illustrated in funeral pamphlets published in regional printing centres such as Vilnius and Kraków. In certain families, allegorical interpretations of heraldic emblems eclipsed any personal references to the deceased individual, as seen repeatedly in examples from the Opaliński magnate dynasty in western Poland, for example. Visual and poetic boat imagery (a reference to the family's coat of arms of Łódzia) played a crucial role in the artistic and performative traditions associated with generations of Opaliński burials, where this emblem's classical as well as Christian symbolism was showcased. Given the number of families that could belong to one coat of arms, or *herb*, in Poland-Lithuania, funerals provided an opportunity to instil a powerful sense of collective identity whilst maximising the potential for conspicuous commemoration. It was this unifying impact of burial practice, steeped in the universal language of emblematics, which made such ceremonial a prevailing articulation of elite status in both Poland and Lithuania.

Whereas the *szlachta* and affluent burghers largely viewed commemorative art and ceremonial as an opportunity to flaunt their dynastic credentials and wealth, the Catholic Church in the Commonwealth strove, rather, to exploit the moralising possibilities of death.⁴ Not since the late medieval period had Europe seen such a concentrated flourishing of eschatological and macabre art, the emergence of which was unprecedented in this region of Central Europe. The religious orders – in particular the often-overlooked mendicant communities – as well as individual parish churches commissioned paintings and sculptures of themes such as the widely-recognised Dance of Death and Triumph of Death, as well as the more obscure Wheel of Death and Bell of Death, which were primarily intended for the purposes of public proselytising.

4 In contrast, *memento mori* themes enjoyed limited popularity among lay art collectors in Poland-Lithuania. An isolated example is an eighteenth-century *vanitas* still life depicting a skull, flute, musical score and figure of Chronos originally displayed in the palace at Podhorce (now Pidhirtsi in western Ukraine). See Ostrowski and Petrus, 2001, pp. 65–66.

As well as their shared emphasis upon death's inevitability and omnipresence, such artistic aids to contemplation were united by their frequent referencing of graphic prototypes. I have drawn attention in this study to the Commonwealth's active and often neglected involvement in the European print trade, and the impact that the availability of printed imagery had upon the development of unprecedented *memento mori* motifs within Central Europe. Benefiting from increased access to woodcuts and engravings of death-related themes from the Netherlands, Germany and Italy, Polish-Lithuanian artists situated their artworks firmly within European traditions of the macabre,⁵ building upon these to create fresh variations on familiar themes. Indigenous graphic artists working in regional printing centres, meanwhile, enabled the self-perpetuation of this process by themselves contributing to the myriad of prototypes available locally as models for larger works.

The spheres of *szlachta* and Church involvement in the development of visual cultures of death cannot be regarded as discrete, however, with churches acting as necessary foci for funerary art and ceremonial, and many prominent members of the clergy hailing from noble families whose dynastic priorities they often shared. The most effective combination of patronage for the propagation of visual cultures of death, in fact, was created when the interests of lay and religious groups converged in the commissioning of ambitious and lasting architectural projects. As I have argued, it was in chapel architecture in particular that secular desires for ostentatious commemoration and the Catholic Church's emphasis upon the contemplation of death were harmoniously united. Usually constructed as appendages to existing churches, and frequently incorporating a cupola, purpose-built funerary chapels acted as extravagant monuments to their benefactors. In some cases, they even displayed conspicuous likenesses of the deceased, as at the Myszkowski Chapel at Kraków's Dominican Church or the Boim Chapel near Lviv Cathedral. These sacred portrait galleries had a solemn function, nevertheless, providing a venue to celebrate mass for the souls of the privileged deceased, thus aiding their speedy liberation from the flames of purgatory, upon the doctrine of which the reformed Catholic Church placed great emphasis. The contemplative nature of these spaces was sometimes directly articulated through motifs such as the Dance of Death, as at the chapel of the Oleśnicki *szlachta* dynasty in Tarłów

5 In the case of macabre art, outward-facing artistic dialogue took place primarily with Western Europe rather than other Central European states. Prominent commissions from elsewhere in the region, notably the Church of the Nativity of Our Lord at Prague's Loreto (discussed in Chapter 1), also followed a similar pattern of engagement with Western European prototypes.

and the Kotowskis in Warsaw, and Passion scenes, as at the aforementioned mausoleum of the Boim burgher family. The Passion narrative, furthermore, lent itself to more developed architectural schemes in which multiple chapels were set in landscapes thought to recall the topography of the Holy Land. Such Jerusalem sites – carefully constructed places of pilgrimage in which individual buildings marked key moments in Christ's Passion – first appeared in Western Europe, yet their later Central European counterparts are among the most expansive surviving examples of this phenomenon. Central Europe's largest Jerusalem site, at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska near Kraków, was an architectural feat that owed its success to both the generosity of the Zebrzydowski magnate family and the dedication of the Observant Franciscans, who oversaw the development and management of this vast pilgrimage venue. Adapting established modes already present in Polish-Lithuanian funerary architecture for a new function, the unprecedented zeal for Jerusalem sites in this part of Central Europe visually bridged the gap between individual commemoration and popular devotion.

The proliferation of chapel architecture across Poland-Lithuania raises important questions about simplistic models of artistic diffusion, challenging the notion that 'it is diffusion that accounts for cultural innovation'.⁶ This premise is still implicit in much art historical scholarship, which has traditionally presented Western Europe as a centre from which innovations reverberate outwards, eventually reaching areas considered peripheral, among them Central Europe. As this study has demonstrated, the remarkable popularity of the domed chapel in the Commonwealth, to give one example, cannot be ascribed solely to the geographical dispersion of artistic models from a single source. Rather, this Polish-Lithuanian phenomenon benefitted from complex currents of cultural exchange with numerous European states over a significant period of time, and depended also on more subtle processes of architectural replication and adaptation within the Commonwealth itself. Of key importance was the influential precedent set by the Sigismund Chapel at Kraków's Wawel Cathedral, a Renaissance domed mausoleum commemorating the Jagiellonians – one of Europe's most significant ruling dynasties at the time – which came to be widely imitated in Poland-Lithuania during its long Baroque. The Sigismund Chapel was not a derivative work when considered within a European context, however, but was highly innovative and composite

6 For this definition of artistic diffusionism, see Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, 'Interpreting Cultural Transfer and the Consequences of Markets and Exchange: Reconsidering *Fumi-e*', in Michael North, ed., *Artistic and Cultural Exchanges Between Europe and Asia, 1400–1900: Rethinking Markets, Workshops and Collections*, Farnham 2010, p. 160.

and, as such, has merited comparison with some of the most renowned contemporaneous Italian sepulchral chapels, whilst also incorporating marked Central European nuances.⁷ In turn, this flagship building spawned a cluster of imitative chapels in the Kraków region,⁸ and in numerous locations further afield, including Vilnius and Lviv. The self-sustained flourishing of chapel architecture within Poland-Lithuania, therefore, demonstrates the limitations of approaching art history from a hegemonic perspective that regards Western Europe as culturally dominant and, rather, encourages a reappraisal of European artistic centres and peripheries.

Throughout this study I have argued that Central European states engaged actively in the development of visual cultures of death in the early modern period, with Poland-Lithuania's artistic legacy being particularly rich and varied in this regard. Yet, the geographical plotting of the wider processes of pan-European cultural exchange that nurtured this phenomenon remains far from straightforward. This difficulty, in itself, demonstrates how artistic practices in Central and Western Europe were closely related, both in stylistic terms and also in the concerns of patrons. It is by focusing on these patrons, in fact, that more meaningful conclusions can be reached about the mechanisms of cultural transmission that impacted so profoundly upon the visual landscape of Central Europe. As has already been highlighted, there was often more than one interest group involved in the most ambitious projects, such as at the aforementioned Observant Franciscan site of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska or the Jesuit Corpus Christi Church at Nesvizh, Poland-Lithuania's first major building in the Baroque style. While both of these enjoyed the patronage of wealthy and influential dynasties – the Zebrzydowski and Radziwiłł families respectively – they also benefitted from the transnational profile of the religious orders that oversaw their devotional function and forged fruitful links with communities in other parts of Europe. For example, the erection of one of Europe's earliest imitations of Rome's Il Gesù at Nesvizh, now in Belarus, indicates the speed with which intra-continental artistic transfer could occur in the early modern period, especially when this was facilitated by well-connected lay and religious groups acting as cultural conduits. It is in cases

7 For example, its use of Hungarian red marble. Art historian David Watkin referred to the Sigismund Chapel as 'one of the finest expressions of Italian early Renaissance ideals of a type not exactly paralleled in Italy and certainly nowhere in France or Germany'. See David Watkin, *A History of Western Architecture*, London 2011, p. 270.

8 This can be related to Torsten Hägerstrand's hypothesis of a 'proximity' effect in the reception of cultural innovation. See Torsten Hägerstrand, *Innovation Diffusion as a Spatial Process*, tr. Allan Pred, Chicago and London 1967, pp. 138 and 163.

such as these that we can observe the inverse relationships between geographical and artistic peripheries within Europe.

Proactive patronage, therefore, was essential to the striking preoccupation with death that permeated so much of Polish-Lithuanian artistic production in the early modern period, from architecture and fine art, to printed imagery as well as material and performative culture. These diverse arts of contemplation and commemoration in fact attest to a considerable degree of cultural unity across an often disparate Commonwealth. Informed by increased and multifaceted contacts with other European states, yet tempered by local priorities and traditions, Poland-Lithuania's visual cultures of death evoked the vibrancy of intra-continental artistic links in the early modern period whilst being redolent of indigenous social structures and concerns. As such, they proclaimed a message that was at once universal and particular, securing a wide-ranging visual legacy which aptly infers the ubiquity of Death and its ultimate Triumph.

The Kraków *Taniec śmierci* (Dance of Death): Transcription and Translation of Textual Cartouches¹

The Central Scene

Top of Central Scene

Różnych Stanow piękne grono	The beautiful circle of the various estates
Gęstą Śmiercią przepleciono	Has been closely interwoven with Death
Zyjąc wszystko tancuiemy	We dance our way through life
Aże obok Śmierci nie wiemy	Not knowing that Death is alongside

Base of Central Scene

Szczęśliwy kto z tego Tańcu	Happy is he who from this dance
Odpocznie w Niebieskim Szańcu ²	Goes to rest in heavenly bliss
Nieszczęsny kto z tego Koła	Unlucky is he who from this circle
Wpiekło wpadszy biada woła	Falls into hell and must cry out in pain

Individual Border Scenes, Clockwise from Top Left Corner

Pope

Trzem Koronom nie Wybaczysz	You do not respect my three crowns ³
w Taniec z sobą prosić raczysz	In asking me to dance with you
Muszę z tobą choć nie mile	I must, though without pleasure,
Zażyć takiej Krotowile ⁴	Take part in this merry play

1 The text for this painting at the Observant Franciscan church was composed in the seventeenth century in a 'folk' style. Nałęcz-Dobrowolski, no. 8, 1924, p. 117; Marcei Nałęcz-Dobrowolski, 'Tańce śmierci w polskiej sztuce', *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, no. 9, 1924, p. 136.

2 Literally, 'heavenly haven'. *Szaniec*: military defence consisting of mounds and trenches. This early form of barricade was used on battlefields between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries to protect artillery positions. The metaphor of heaven as a place of safety behind barricades alludes to the shelter it offers from the dangers and troubles of the mortal world.

3 The three crowns of the Papal tiara.

4 *Krotowila*: light-hearted play consisting of caricature, grotesque and situation comedy.

Emperor

y Iaz to nie zwyciężony
 Stobą mam byc ziednoczony
 Wszytka moc Cesarska moia
 Schnie gdy się tknie ręka twoia

And [even]I, who remain unconquered,
 Am to be united with you
 All of my imperial might
 Dries up when touched by your hand

King

Dałbym berło y z Korono
 Bymię Stańca Uwolniono
 O? nader przykre niestety
 Ktore smierc skacze Ballety

I would give my sceptre and crown
 To be released from this dance
 Ah, they are very unpleasant, unfortunately,
 These ballet dances led by Death

Cardinal

Kardynalskie Kapełusze
 Chocbym niechciał rzucać muszę
 Straszynsz to skok gdzie muzyka
 Ze umrzeć trzeba wykrzyka

I must drop my cardinal's hat
 Even though I do not wish to do so
 It is a terrifying dance-move when the music
 Cries out that one must die

Bishop

Postradales Pastorała
 Gdyc Smierc w Taniec iść kazala
 Infulac nic nie pomoze
 Musisz skoczyc Wgrob nieboze

You lost your crozier
 When Death ordered you to go and dance
 Your mitre will be of no help to you
 You must jump into your grave, you poor thing

Friars

Wszak Kanony Zakazuią,
 niechaj Xięza nie tancuią
 A wyscie Święci Kapłani
 gwałtem wten Taniec Zabrani

Although canon law forbids
 That priests dance
 Yet you, priests of God,
 Have been violently taken into this dance

Prince

Niebądz chocias Xiężę hardy
 Z smierciąc te skaczesz Galaridy

At least, do not be proud, my Prince
 [When] you jump around dancing the *galarda*⁵
 with Death

5 *Galarda* (pl. *galardy*): an Italian dance adopted in Poland. Other dancing terminology used in the remaining verses includes: *ballety* (ballet dances; in the verse about the king); *skok* (jump, better translated in the context as dance-move; in the verse about the cardinal); and *skoczke* (personifying Death as a female dancer; in the verse about the senator).

Bo wnet Iasnie Oswiecony⁶
Tytuł twój będzie Zaczemiony

Because soon, 'Your Highness',
Your title will go tumbling down

Senator

Darmo się w Śpierzysz pod boki
Gdy wteż Śmiercią idziesz skoki
Rusz się skrzęśła choć nie raczysz
Gdy te skoczkę w Oczach baczysz

In vain do you put your hands on your hips
When you dance together with Death
Get up from your seat, whether you want to or not,
When this dancer appears before your eyes

Nobleman

Iako się twe Suche Kości
Targnęły na me Wolności
Nie pozwalam wtanieć z tobą
Ty mię przecie ciągniesz z Sobą

How have your dry bones
Encroached upon my privileges
I do not allow you to dance with me
Yet you pull me along with you

Merchant

Pros mię raczy Obławaty
Bo cię Widzę żeś bez Szaty
Nagaś a mnie Odzianego
Prowadzisz do Tańca Swego

Ask me rather for fabric
As I see that you have no cloak
You are naked and you lead me to dance
Although I am dressed

Peasant

y Ty Kmiołku Spracowany
w Śmiertelność się wybrał tany
Niepyszna Dama z Oraczem
Tak Tańczy iako z Bogaczem

And you too, work-weary peasant,
Have joined a deadly dance
This lady has no pride: with the peasant
She dances as with a rich man

Soldier and Beggar

Czemusz to Werdo⁷ nie pytasz
Kiedy się ztą Damą witasz
Na obu was dekret srogi
Żołdak Umrze y Ubogi

Why do you not ask 'who is there'?
When you greet this lady
This severe decree concerns you both
The soldier and beggar will [both] die

6 *Iasnie Oswiecony*: a courteous expression appropriate for addressing a prince. It literally means 'brightly enlightened', hence it can be *zaczemiony* (eclipsed) as the metaphor in the next line suggests (this pun has been substituted in the translation with the equivalent expression 'Your Highness' which then 'goes tumbling down').

7 *Werdo*: a military expression used by sentries; derived from the German *Wer da?* (Who [goes] there?).

Non-Christians

Sprośni Turcy Brzydcy Żydzi
 Jak się wami Śmierć nie hydzi
 Na Żydowskie niedba Smrody
 Z dzikimi skacze Narody

Bawdy Turks, ugly Jews
 How is Death not disgusted by you
 It ignores Jewish odours
 And dances with savage nations

Fool and Child

Twe y tego Dziecka Żarty
 Zapieniądz teraz nie Warty
 Tu to Sęk się Wydworowac
 Żeby z Śmiercią nie tańcowac

Both yours and this child's jokes
 Aren't worth a penny now
 Here it is impossible to use your jokes
 To evade dancing with Death

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